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PRESS RELEASE

Attitudes in the Republic of Ireland Relevant to the Northern Ireland Problem:
Vol. 1 - Descriptive Analysis and Some Comparisons with Attitudes in Northern
Ireland and Great Britain

by

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PRESS RELEASE

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INTRODUCTION

This report is the first of two reports of a major study of attitudes in the Republic relating to the Northern Ireland problem. In this report we have included, firstly, data on choice of solutions to the problem in Northern Ireland, data on preferences regarding Irish and British Government policies and data on attitudes relating to partition, to the IRA and to Northern Ireland Protestants. We have reserved for a second report data concerning attitudes towards the nature of Irish society and, with the exception of the attitudes to Northern Ireland Protestants, just mentioned, data on inter-group attitudes.

The Republic of Ireland sample consisted of (a) a nationwide representative sample of 1758 respondents; (b) an "extra Border" sample of 212 respondents; and (c) an "extra Protestant" sample of 232 respondents. The data collection in the Republic of Ireland was carried out by trained interviewers of the Economic and Social Research Institute, in July-September 1978.

The questionnaire, which was constructed on the basis of an extensive review of the literature, pilot testing and pre-testing, employed a variety of attitude measurement techniques, approaching the subject matter of attitudes to the problem in Northern Ireland at a number of different levels. Of particular importance in this regard is the use of multiple indicators or statements to measure certain key attitudes (attitude to partition, to the IRA and towards Northern Ireland Protestants). The fact that the evidence concerning these attitudes consists of more than one element increases one's confidence in the findings. A further consequence of the variety and comprehensive nature of the techniques employed is, we believe, that the data do not simply deal with transient opinions at one point in time but can be expected to reflect more durable and stable attitudes and orientations.

Finally it should be pointed out that while focussing mainly on attitudes in the Republic of Ireland, this report also contains comparisons with attitudes in Northern Ireland and Great Britain based on evidence from surveys carried out at approximately the same time (see General Summary for details).

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The majority view in the Republic of Ireland is the traditional nationalist one but within this majority view there are both important variations and significant potential conflicts. The nationalist aspect is evident in the 68 per cent who choose some form of a united Ireland as, for them, "the most acceptable and workable solution" to the problem in Northern Ireland, and in the 72 per cent who endorse the policy proposal of unilateral British withdrawal i.e. withdrawal "without the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland". It is evident also in the fact that 71 per cent reject the policy proposal of removing from the Republic's Constitution what was described, in summary and somewhat simplified form, as "the claim to Northern Ireland". Finally it is evident in the fact that, on a measure of attitude to partition, which was quite traditional in its formulation, 72 per cent of the population in the Republic are anti-partitionist.

The variation within this majority view is evident, for example, in the fact that some people are more anti-partitionist than others and only 50 per cent actually indicate that they would vote to retain Articles 2 and 3 in the Constitution if a referendum were held on the issue. A further and important example of variation within the majority view is that the 68 per cent who choose some form of united Ireland solution consists of 41 per cent who choose a unitary united Ireland and 27 per cent who choose a federal united Ireland.

Potential conflicts between attitudes are evident in the fact that, while 72 per cent endorsed the policy proposal of unilateral British withdrawal, 60 - 70 per cent are, in one degree or another, pessimistic about the consequences of such withdrawal and in the fact that, while 68 per cent choose a united Ireland solution, 74 per cent have an attitude which is anti Northern Ireland Protestant.

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In addition to dealing with potential conflicts between attitudes held by the same individuals, the report also deals with conflict between groups in that the majority view in Northern Ireland is virtually the opposite of that in the Republic in terms of both choice of solution and policy preferences. It is important also to note the finding that such conflict exists not just between people in the Republic and Northern Ireland Protestants but that there is considerable discrepancy between the views of people in the Republic and Catholics in Northern Ireland.

This summary statement obviously requires considerable elaboration and this will be set out under the following major headings:

- A. Choice of Solution
- B. Preferences Regarding Irish and British Government Policy
- C. General Attitudes (to Partition, to the IRA and towards Northern Ireland Protestants).
- D. Attitudes in Northern Ireland: Comparisons and Contrasts.

A. CHOICE OF SOLUTION

We have already seen that the 68 per cent who choose some form of united Ireland breaks down into 41 per cent choice of a unitary united Ireland ("Northern Ireland and the Republic to unite, with one government") and 27 per cent choice of a federal united Ireland ("Northern Ireland and the

Republic to unite in a federal system, that is with strong regional governments for Northern Ireland and the Republic as well as an overall central government"). This choice is related to level of education and urban residence: the higher the level of education, the more frequent the choice of a federal form of a united Ireland and residents of urban areas are more likely to select the federal option than are residents of rural areas. A further differentiation in regard to the choice of institutional form of a united Ireland occurs in that the majority of those who choose a unitary united Ireland choose power-sharing as an appropriate form of government of that united Ireland. However, as indicated in the text, caution should be exercised in interpreting the significance of this particular finding.

The extent of the consensus in the Republic of Ireland in regard to choice of united Ireland as the most workable and acceptable solution is emphasised by the fact that the third most frequently made choice (after the 27% choice of a federal united Ireland) is what is probably the nearest thing to a united Ireland: joint control of Northern Ireland by the British and Irish Government (11 per cent). An independent Northern Ireland is chosen by 10 per cent. The option of Northern Ireland remaining within the United Kingdom with devolved government (with or without power-sharing) is chosen by 5 per cent and direct rule from London or full integration into the United Kingdom by 4 per cent.

The figure for support for devolved Government with power-sharing may seem surprisingly low. It must be borne in mind, however, that, as the question was phrased, choice of solution is conditioned by two factors. Devolved government with power-sharing may fail to win acceptability in the Republic of Ireland because it involves the main-

tainance of the link with Great Britain. In addition, or alternatively, it may fail on the critterion of workability. The fall of the power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive in May 1974, the results of the 1975 Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention, and the failure to agree on an institutional accommodation despite various informal meetings and overtures in the period between 1975 and 1978 may explain the low rate of choice of devolved government with power-sharing as a workable solution. Moreover, as discussed in the text, other available survey evidence corroborates our findings in regard to support for power-sharing devolved government within the United Kingdom as a solution. It should however be immediately emphasised that there is very widespread support for the implementation of power-sharing in Northern Ireland. Seventy eight per cent agree with the proposal that "the Irish Government should insist that the British implement power-sharing in Northern Ireland". The evidence suggests that this is support for something which is seen as an interim measure rather than as a long term solution.

B. PREFERENCES REGARDING IRISH AND BRITISH GOVERNMENT POLICY

In addition to the issues of constitutional change in the Republic and of unilateral British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, the research dealt with a range of other policy proposals. People in the Republic are approximately evenly divided on the issue of the legalization of divorce - a question which was posed in the context of steps designed to assist in bringing about a solution. In line with the position outlined above, a majority (59 per cent) reject a policy of less emphasis on the goal of reunification and 78 per cent support a proposal of British withdrawal which is less immediate in its formulation and which makes no reference to unilateral action - withdrawal "at a fixed date in the future". We have already seen that, in response to what

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we have termed the proposal of unilateral British withdrawal ("The British Government should declare their intention to withdraw whether the majority in Northern Ireland agrees or not"), 71 per cent agree.

Expected Consequences of Unilateral British Withdrawal

This figure for support for unilateral withdrawal should be seen in the context of the expectations which people have of the consequences of British withdrawal. While 71 per cent support the policy of British withdrawal only 43 per cent believe that such withdrawal would lead to a negotiated settlement and 59 per cent feel that it would lead to a great increase in violence. Combining this data leads to the conclusion that 69 per cent of people are pessimistic about the consequences of withdrawal - 11 per cent saying the situation will remain as it is, 37 per cent seeing a great increase in violence and 21 per cent saying that it would lead to an eventual settlement but that the route to this would be a great increase in violence. However these pessimistic expectations of the consequences of British withdrawal appear to be discounted by a substantial proportion of people when it comes to expressing a preference for the policy. Subsequent analysis (presented in Section IVD and summarized in Section VG) confirmed this and indicated that the preference for unilateral British withdrawal is conditioned more by the attitude of anti-partitionism than by perception of the consequences of withdrawal and that relative weight of the two factors in question suggests that the lack of favourable consequences is tolerated because the policy is in accord with the basic tenet of anti-partitionism.

Preferences Regarding Security Policy

In regard to preferences in the area of security policy it was emphasised that, since such preferences could be influenced by a wide variety of considerations, they could not simply be interpreted as attitudes to the IRA as such. Our findings in regard to attitudes to the IRA are summarised below. Despite the generally acknowledged stringency of Irish Government security policies,

63 per cent of people in the Republic support the view that "the Irish Government should take a tougher line with the IRA". This could be based on a perception of Government weakness in this area or on a preference for an even tougher policy. The perception that the Irish Government is weak in relation to one aspect of security policy (cross Border security) is fairly prevalent - 45 per cent taking the view that "the Irish Government is not doing its best to ensure that the IRA is unable to operate from the Republic's side of the Border". However the evidence suggests that both factors - perception of Government weakness and preference for an even tougher policy - play a role in relation to the preference for "a tougher line". Finally, in the area of general security policy, it is notable that there is less support for a tougher anti IRA policy to be undertaken by the British Government.

The constitutional difficulties which surround the issue of extradition in the Republic of Ireland may be reflected in the almost even division between 46 per cent in favour and 48 per cent against extradition of people accused of politically motivated crimes. In relation to two proposals in which political motivation is an issue - a post settlement amnesty by the Irish Government and the granting by the British government of political status to prisoners claiming political motivation - opinion in the Republic is somewhat more clearcut. Fifty five per cent support the amnesty proposal and 60 per cent the political status proposal. While this data suggests the acceptance of the notion of political motivation, an actual political role for the IRA is not accepted by people in the Republic. The difference is narrow (49 per cent against 44 per cent in favour) in the case of the proposal that the British Government should negotiate directly with the IRA, but more clearcut (56 per cent against to 39 per cent in favour) on the issue of media access for IRA spokesmen. As already indicated, these responses raise rather than answer questions about attitude to the IRA as such. This issue is dealt with in Section IV of the report where four attitudes of central importance (attitude to partition, two types of attitude to the IRA and

attitude towards Northern Ireland Protestants) are identified and discussed. As indicated above, the use of more than one piece of evidence to measure each of these attitudes enhances one's confidence in the validity of the results.

C. GENERAL ATTITUDES RELEVANT TO THE NORTHERN IRELAND

PROBLEM

Attitude to Partition

Our measure of attitude to partition is much more than an alternative expression of choice of a united Ireland. Made up of six statements in all, it contains assertions such as "this is an island and it cannot be permanently partitioned" and "the sooner we get the idea that the North belongs to us out of our heads the better". Thus it strongly emphasises the territorial aspect of reunification and thereby expresses a central aspect of traditional nationalist thinking in relation to Northern Ireland. We have already adverted to the fact that 72 per cent are anti-partitionist as we have measured this attitude. A further 15 per cent are neutral and only 13 per cent actually reject the traditional anti-partitionist outlook. However it is also important to note the variations in the intensity of anti-partitionism - roughly speaking, 27 per cent are slightly anti-partitionist, 27 per cent moderately so and 18 per cent strongly anti-partitionist. Analysis of the relationship between attitude to partition and choice of solution indicates that these variations have at least one important effect. It emerges from such analysis that the choice of a federal form of a united Ireland is related to a lower degree of anti-partitionism and thus it would appear that such a choice is not seen as an alternative means of achieving the original anti-partitionist programme but represents a reappraisal of basic objectives.

Two Types of Attitude to the IRA

Detailed analysis of the responses to five statements measuring attitudes to the IRA indicated that the attitude in question was two dimensional

The first dimension or type of attitude is Attitude to IRA Activities: Support versus Opposition and the second is Attitude to IRA Motives: Sympathy versus Rejection.

The identification and measurement of these two distinct types of attitude is of crucial importance in assessing attitudes to the IRA. Attitude to IRA activities is a clear and unambiguous measure. Given the nature of the attitude in question it is necessary to be particularly careful and precise in discussing its distribution. The majority of people (61 per cent) are opposed to IRA activities as we have measured this attitude. A further 19 per cent are neutral. In regard to the remaining 21 per cent support for IRA activities, it should first of all be noted that this includes 13 per cent who are slightly supportive as against 8 per cent moderately to strongly supportive. This having been said, the stark fact remains that 21 per cent of the population emerge as being in some degree supportive in their attitude to IRA activities. It should also be emphasised that we have no evidence that an attitude of support for IRA activities, as we have measured it, leads to any concrete actions, by way of monetary contributions or whatever, in support of the campaign of the IRA. The context in which these figures for attitude to IRA activity (61 per cent opposition, 19 per cent neutrality and 21 per cent support) should be interpreted is that these attitudes are part of the overall approach of people in the Republic to the Northern Ireland issue. As such it must be acknowledged that, on this evidence, opposition to IRA activities is not overwhelming and certainly does not match the strong opposition so often articulated by public figures.

Support for IRA activities is quite clearly a much more hardline attitude than sympathy for IRA motives, and, though the two may often be positively related they can also run in contrary directions. Evidently some respondents condemn the activities of the IRA while sympathising with their aims and motives. Failure to bear this in mind in reflecting on the data would involve a serious misinterpretation of the figure of 41 per cent sympathy for

IRA motives as support or sympathy for the IRA as such. However neither can this attitude be explained away as an alternative expression of the aspiration to reunification. The items measuring the attitude encompass agreement with the aims (plural) of the IRA and the reference to patriotic and idealistic characteristics. It is therefore genuinely an attitude to the IRA and the most satisfactory interpretation of it is, as we have suggested, Attitude to Motives: Sympathy versus Rejection. On this evidence, a plurality of respondents (42 per cent) sympathise with the motives of the IRA, 25 per cent are neutral on this dimension and a minority (34 per cent) reject their motives. To repeat a point made in regard to attitude to IRA activities, these attitudes should be seen as an element of people's approach to the Northern Ireland problem and assessed as such. Analysis of the relationship between attitudes and policy preferences shows that an attitude of sympathy for IRA motives does make a distinct and independent contribution to people's preferences in relation to security policy. Moreover sympathy for motives may lead to an attitude of support for activities and, in so far as it does, it presents a problem for political and opinion leaders concerned to condemn IRA activity and diminish support for it.

Attitude towards Northern Ireland Protestants

The fourth and final attitude identified and measured in this way was Attitude towards Northern Ireland Protestants: Anti versus Pro. The prevalent attitude is one of opposition. Seventy four per cent are on the anti Northern Ireland Protestant side of the mid-point, 18 per cent neutral and only 7 per cent pro. While it may be argued that this distribution of attitudes is a product of prevailing political structures, it must also be seen as an obstacle to significant political overtures towards Northern Ireland Protestants on the part of the Republic of Ireland and therefore as an obstacle to reunification by consent.

Given the importance of the four attitudes just outlined it is worth summarizing their distribution in various sections and strata of society.

ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL, DEMOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCES

Attitudes and Social and Demographic Differences

A consistent pattern is found on three of the four attitudes in question (attitudes to partition and both IRA attitudes). Anti-partitionism, Support for IRA activities and sympathy for IRA motives is greater among men than among women, among those of rural rather than urban residence, among older (40+) respondents and among those of lower occupational status and lower level of education. The fourth attitude (Attitude to Northern Ireland Protestants: Pro versus Anti) varies only with age and between those with third level and less than third level education - younger people and those with third level education (two categories with considerable overlap) being less opposed to Northern Ireland Protestants.

Attitudes and Differences of Religion

Consistent differences are found between Catholics and Protestants in the Republic on all four attitudes but it is notable that, though Protestants in the Republic are less negative in their attitudes toward Northern Ireland Protestants than Catholics in the Republic, their average score on the attitude is still slightly above the mid-point, on a scale on which a high score indicates opposition to Northern Ireland Protestants.

Attitudes and Differences in Political Attentiveness

Turning to the area of political attention and involvement, one finds that, in general, those who are more interested in politics and involved in political discussion and those who are more attentive to political communication tend to be more anti-partitionist, more supportive of IRA activities, more sympathetic to IRA motives and more opposed to Northern Ireland Protestants. The main exception to this generalization is that greater attention to television

and radio current affairs programmes is not associated with greater support for IRA activity.

Attitudes and Newspaper Readership

In the area of newspaper consumption, it is the particular newspaper read rather than the frequency of reading that enables one to distinguish different degrees of each of the four attitudes. The most notable difference is that Irish Press readers are consistently highest on each of the attitudes (anti partition, support for IRA activities, sympathy for IRA motives and anti-Northern Ireland Protestants) while Irish Times readers are consistently lowest. Two qualifications should be noted: though highest on support for IRA activities, Irish Press readers are on the opposed side of the mid-point of the attitude scale and, secondly, one cannot conclude that reading a particular paper causes certain attitudes, the influence could just as easily be in the opposite direction, from possession of a certain attitude to selection of a particular newspaper.

Attitudes and Political Party Support

Finally in the area of political involvement, with one exception, differences exist on each of the four attitudes between Fine Gael party identifiers on the one hand and Fianna Fail and Labour party identifiers on the other. The consistent pattern of differences is that Fine Gael identifiers are less anti-partitionist, less supportive of IRA methods, less sympathetic to IRA motives and less opposed to Northern Ireland Protestants. The exception is that there is no significant difference between Fine Gael and Labour identifiers on the fourth variable: attitude to Northern Ireland Protestants. It is important to emphasise that these differences are relatively small - party supporters are not polarised on these issues. There is in fact an inter-party consensus, for instance on anti-partitionism and on opposition to IRA activities. What we have identified

is the existence of differences within this consensus. Finally one should note that one cannot make inferences from the attitudes of party identifiers or supporters to the positions of the parties as organizations.

D. ATTITUDES IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN: COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

Choice of Solution

Two major points emerge from comparison of attitudes in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The first is the extent to which attitudes in Northern Ireland constitute an obstacle in the way of the realization of the nationalist objectives which we have seen to be widely endorsed in the Republic. A clear majority in Northern Ireland (72 per cent) opt for solutions involving staying within the United Kingdom and only 16 per cent choose the solution of some form of united Ireland which, as we have seen, is chosen by 68 per cent of people in the Republic.

This conflict of view is of course sharpest between the predominantly Catholic population of the Republic of Ireland and Protestants in Northern Ireland - 89 per cent of whom opt for remaining within the United Kingdom. However, and this is the second major point, comparison also shows that there are notable differences between the population of the Republic of Ireland and Catholics in Northern Ireland in regard to choice of solution. The solution of any form of united Ireland chosen by 68 per cent of people in the Republic is chosen by only 39 per cent of Catholics in Northern Ireland. An even greater discrepancy is apparent when one compares the close to 50 per cent support for remaining part of the United Kingdom among Northern Ireland Catholics with the 9 per cent support for this series of options among the population of the Republic. These figures cast considerable doubt on the traditional assumption of a common viewpoint and purpose in a nationalist community defined as including Northern Ireland Catholics.

This discrepancy between the attitudes of people in the Republic and those of Northern Ireland Catholics, together with the fact that there are significant divisions among Northern Ireland Protestants in relation to choice of solution, means that there is both conflict and agreement between the two communities in Northern Ireland. The conflict is evident in the 39 per cent of Northern Catholics who choose a united Ireland as against 6 per cent of Northern Ireland Protestants and in the gap between the 89 per cent of Northern Ireland Protestants who choose remaining part of the United Kingdom and the 50 per cent of Catholics who do so. However, the gap between the two communities in Northern Ireland on this issue is not as wide as is often assumed - the fact is that 50 per cent of Catholics opt for remaining within the United Kingdom. Conflict is also evident in relation to the internal organisation of power. The solution of remaining within the United Kingdom with devolved government based on majority rule which is the choice of 38 per cent of Protestants in Northern Ireland, is chosen by only 1 per cent of Northern Ireland Catholics. However, there is also agreement between substantial bodies of opinion from each community on this issue. Thus 39 per cent of Northern Ireland Catholics choose as the solution "Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom with a devolved government based on power-sharing, that is, guaranteeing the Catholic minority a right to be part of the government". In this choice they are in agreement with 35 per cent of Northern Ireland Protestants. It is sobering to recall, as already noted, that the option providing this area of agreement between the communities in Northern Ireland is chosen as a solution by only 4 per cent of respondents in the Republic of Ireland and that combined first and second choice support for this option in the Republic is only 9 per cent. Finally, it is worth noting that Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland agree on another aspect of the solutions question, i.e., on not choosing an independent Northern Ireland. This option is chosen by only three per cent of each of the communities in Northern Ireland and it is prominent on the list of least liked solutions in both communities.

Recent discussion of the issue of direct rule has referred to survey evidence showing the acceptability of direct rule to both communities in Northern Ireland. The present report concludes that the view as to the acceptability of direct rule holds, provided it is remembered that it is the acceptability of a policy to be adopted by the British Government in a very specifically defined set of circumstances. On the present evidence, this sort of support has not been converted into support for direct rule as a solution. However it should also be noted that it elicits very low levels of dislike from either community in Northern Ireland.

The figures for choice of solution in Great Britain are 25 per cent for Northern Ireland to remain part of the U.K., 24 per cent for an independent Northern Ireland, 21 per cent for a united Ireland, 13 per cent for joint control of Northern Ireland by the British and Irish Governments and 17 per cent "don't know". It is notable that the preference for maintaining the link between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is considerably less in Britain than in Northern Ireland and even less in Britain than among the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. Finally we used the comparative data on choice of solution to assess support for some form of united Ireland among people in the island of Ireland as a whole. As was stated in the text, this was done without any intention of prejudging the issue of the appropriateness of the whole of Ireland as a forum for the resolution of this issue. The result which emerges is that support for a united Ireland solution among the people of Ireland as a whole is between 48 and 52 per cent.

Policy Preferences

The picture of polarization between people in the Republic of Ireland and people in Northern Ireland is repeated when we consider the proposal of unilateral British withdrawal. This proposal is supported by 71 per cent in the Republic and opposed by 74 per cent in Northern Ireland.

The discrepancy between people in the Republic and Catholics in Northern Ireland is also repeated - 49 per cent of the latter are in favour of unilateral withdrawal. It is interesting to note however that when the proposal of British withdrawal is put with an emphasis on the longer term and without mention of any unilateral aspect, support among Catholics in Northern Ireland rises to 64 per cent.

Expectations regarding the consequences of British withdrawal are considerably more pessimistic in Northern Ireland than in the Republic. Eighty one per cent of people in Northern Ireland believe that British withdrawal would lead to a great increase in violence (88 per cent of Northern Ireland Protestants 67 per cent of Northern Ireland Catholics). We have already seen that 59 per cent of people in the Republic take this view. While expectations such as these do not enable one to predict the consequences of withdrawal, they are clearly relevant to a consideration of that policy option.

On the issue of preferences regarding constitutional change in the Republic of Ireland, sixty nine per cent of people in Northern Ireland feel that the Irish Government should remove from the Constitution the claim to Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Protestants - 88 per cent in favour of removal, Northern Ireland Catholics - 30 per cent in favour). Removal of the prohibition on divorce from the Republic's Constitution a proposal on which, as we have seen, people in the Republic are approximately evenly divided, is desired by 60 per cent of people in Northern Ireland - in this case the figure for Northern Ireland Protestants is 68 per cent. These figures indicate the existence of a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the relevance of constitutional change in the Republic to the search for a solution.

On the security policy front, 96 per cent of Northern Ireland Protestants call for a tougher line to be taken by the Irish Government against

the IRA and 89 per cent feel that the Irish Government is weak in the area of cross border security. It is argued in the text that these figures suggest the existence of a failure on the part of the Irish Government to communicate its policies on these issues to the Northern Ireland Protestant community. The fact that 98 per cent of Northern Ireland Protestants and 64 per cent of Northern Ireland Catholics support the implementation of extradition by the Irish Government further underlines the need for the Irish Government to more successfully communicate its position to people in Northern Ireland.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The report emphasises that the existence of particular attitudes does not require that decisions be taken or policies adopted in conformity with the attitudes in question. Political leaders and indeed all those concerned with the problem can respond to the situation we have described either by adhering closely to the attitudes expressed by majorities in the communities concerned or by seeking to transform those attitudes in a direction conducive to a mutually acceptable solution. In either event, what is important is that the nature and implications of public attitudes be taken into account and that they be fully debated and discussed. It is our hope that this report will make a contribution to this essential process of debate and discussion, not only within the Republic of Ireland, but also within each of the other three communities concerned and ultimately between all four.