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IRELAND



Reference Code:	2012/90/640
Creation Date(s):	25 March 1982
Extent and medium:	7 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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22125 (PA)

Statement by the Taoiseach, Mr. Charles J. Haughey,
in Dail Eireann on
Thursday, 25th March, 1982.

With your permission, a Cheann Comhairle, I propose to make a statement on my recent visit to the United States of America.

I wish to say that I do so solely pursuant to the offer I made yesterday favourably to consider such a step, in order to resolve a situation which should never have arisen and, as Deputy Cluskey aptly put it, to restore some sanity to our proceedings.

Accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, I visited the United States from 15-17th March, in response to the kind invitation of President Reagan to meet him and to join him for luncheon in the White House on St. Patrick's Day.

I was glad to avail of the opportunity while in the United States to pay a visit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Senor Perez de Cuellar, address the Economic Club of New York, hold separate discussions with Governor Carey, Senator Kennedy and other political leaders, and meet a representative group of the Friends of Ireland organisation in

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the United States Congress, headed by Speaker O'Neill and Congressman Foley.

Accompanying the President at our meeting in the White House, were Vice-President Bush, Secretary of State Haig, the National Security Adviser, Judge Clark and the newly designated Ambassador of the United States to Ireland, Mr. Peter Dailey. During our discussions we had a useful exchange of views on a range of subjects, including the links between Ireland and the United States, the situation in Northern Ireland, United States investment in Ireland and aspects of international affairs. I invited the President to pay a visit to Ireland and he indicated a keen desire to do so at a mutually convenient time.

I saw my visit in the context of the intention, to which I referred here on 9th March, of seeking international backing for the Government's efforts to bring together all the parties involved in the tragedy of Northern Ireland, in an endeavour to bring about a durable settlement in a spirit of peace, reconciliation and accommodation for all the traditions in this country. I wished to dispel any doubt or confusion that might exist on Irish Government policy and to set out clearly what that policy is.

I indicated my belief that Britain should be encouraged to seek more positively and persuade more actively a change in attitudes and outlooks which would pave the way for the unity so ardently desired by the vast majority of the Irish

people. I said that we had pledged ourselves to overcoming the obstacles to the further reconciliation of the two great traditions of our island and that, for our part, we would give, to that end, any pledge that may be sought, any guarantee that may be thought necessary and make unassailable constitutional arrangements for those in the Northern part of Ireland who may feel a special need for such provisions. I expressed the hope that the great fund of goodwill for Ireland that exists in America would enable the objectives I have mentioned to be reflected in American policy.

The extent to which that ideal is already widely shared in the Congress of the United States may be seen from the St. Patrick's Day statement of the Friends of Ireland group. I welcome the renewal of their commitment to the goal of Irish unity, through reconciliation and on the basis of consent. Let me here welcome the declaration of support for the friends of Ireland in America, included in the statement issued by President Reagan on the occasion of our meeting.

The President's statement also contained a number of other elements that will be a source of encouragement. I refer in particular to his words of support for the widening of Anglo-Irish co-operation instituted by my meeting with the British Prime Minister in December, 1980. The President viewed this as contributing to a process of reconciliation between the two traditions and between the two countries which he saw as the

only basis for a lasting solution. The President indicated the readiness of the United States Government to contribute in any way they can to such a solution. He also reiterated his appeal to all Americans with Ireland's interest at heart to refrain from assisting those who perpetuate violence. Finally, I welcome his strong and unequivocal support for American investment in Ireland - to the benefit of all our people.

I know that this latter statement will be of great assistance to the Industrial Development Authority in the stepped-up campaign they are mounting to attract industrial and services investment. I was glad to have the opportunity, through my address to the Economic Club of New York, to inaugurate this fresh effort. I am satisfied, and am happy to assure the House, that my speech on that occasion helped to correct the damage done by some unfortunate impressions conveyed on previous occasions and re-established Ireland as a country which offers a stable, welcoming and profitable environment for investment.

My discussions with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in addition to touching on Northern Ireland, ranged over a wide range of current topics in international affairs, including the role of the United Nations generally and in peace-keeping, the Middle East, Namibia, Afghanistan, Cyprus, the hostilities between Iran and Iraq, the problems of South-East Asia, especially Kampuchea, the problems in Central America, with particular reference to El Salvador, and the Law of the Sea Conference. In the course of what was a valuable exchange, I reiterated

Ireland's total commitment to the role of the United Nations in the resolution of international conflict and in the advancement of human welfare throughout the world and informed him of the Government's positive response to the request for additional Irish troops for the UNIFIL force in the Lebanon. The Secretary-General, for his part, paid tribute to the Irish commitment to the United Nations and its peace-keeping operations and to the work of Major General Callaghan, as Commander of UNIFIL.

I should like to express to President Reagan and to all those I met in the United States, my deep and sincere gratitude for the warmth of the welcome, and the generosity of the hospitality extended to us in the United States. I know that these are a token of the bonds of kinship that exist between Ireland and that great democracy.

I have had copies of my speech to the Economic Club of New York, my address in the White House, the statement made by President Reagan on St. Patrick's Day and the Joint St. Patrick's Day Statement of the Friends of Ireland laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

In conclusion, since I may be unable, because of the position in which I have been placed, to reply later, I will deal now with Deputy FitzGerald's comment on Tuesday last: that I did not during my visit to the United States call, in the particular manner he would have wished, on people there to refrain from support for violence or people involved in or associated with violence. This attack is not alone without substance but was also unwise.

Successive Governments here have upheld the attitude of the vast majority of our people in their opposition to violence as a means of solving the Northern or any other problem. I made my position on the American dimension of this subject perfectly clear in a lengthy speech I made in Cork on 27th July, 1980. Each Government has enforced the necessary policies in their own way over a lengthy period. No one can be in any doubt about our attitude and our policy. Joint communiques issued following meetings between the Irish and British Heads of Government have almost invariably acknowledged satisfaction with the extent and effectiveness of security measures, including both occasions when I met the present Prime Minister during my previous period of office.

It is a matter of judgement how often one should repeat a principle of this kind. Constant repetition may turn it into a sort of ritual cliché. On the occasion of my visit

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to the United States, this time, such repetition would have been redundant, since both President Reagan and the Friends of Ireland group, on their side and as an integral part of my visit made appeals along the lines in question, in their statements: and I believe that law-abiding Americans would respond more favourably to their President and Congressional leaders than to anything I might say.

Rather than repeat unprofitably something which has been clearly established already - what is purely defensive in our policy - my purpose was rather to offer a clear line of action as a positive alternative to support for violence. I believe that this approach will yield significant results. Can we now get away from sterile point-scoring on this issue which may in fact do harm to the policy we all espouse by creating doubts about it in the minds of some who may not be all that familiar with our party political system?