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Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach

RECEIVED
09 OCT 1998
SECRETARY GENERAL'S OFFICE

9 October, 1998.

Secretary General,
Department of Foreign Affairs.

Dear Secretary General,

The President, Mary McAleese has accepted an invitation Mr. Joe Lynch, St. Joseph's CBS, to perform a function on 9 November, 1998.

I would be grateful if you could provide ***a speech*** for the occasion. The material should reach me not later than ***28 October, 1998*** please, for transmission to the President's Office.

It should be borne in mind that in view of the position of the President and the Government, respectively, under the Constitution, the notes should cover the subject matter in a general way and should not elaborate either on Government policy or on matters of Departmental administration. In particular, the notes should not contain the type of statistical information or detailed analysis which would be expected in a speech delivered by a Member of the Government or a Minister of State. They should pay due regard to the President's status as taking precedence over all other persons in the State and to the function of the Office under the Constitution.

Any queries on the foregoing should be referred to this Department for further advice.

Requests for speech material for the President should continue to receive priority and the notes should reach this Department not later than the date specified in the second paragraph above. The material should not be forwarded to the Áras direct.

Yours sincerely,

pp. Pauline Kiernan.
Protocol and General Section.
Tel: 619 4091
Fax: 619 4257

Tithe an Rialtais, Baile Átha Cliath 2.
Government Buildings, Dublin 2.

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Blake Helen

To: Aras - Brian McCarthy
Subject: President McAleese - Speaking material for Omagh Remembrance Service
Priority: High

I attach draft speaking material for President McAleese for the Rembrance Service for Omagh in Drogheda on November 9th (in case your system does not read wordperfect, I have also pasted it below).

I have also copied the text to Pauline Kiernan in the Taoiseach's Department.

Helen Blake

<<File Attachment: DROGHEDA.WPD>>

Draft Remarks for President McAleese at Ecumenical Remembrance Service for Omagh, Drogheda, November 9th 1998

I am very pleased to be here today to join with you in this remembrance service for those who died or suffered so tragically in Omagh in August. Events such as this afternoon's, which bring together people from all Irish traditions, to reflect, to remember and to pray, demonstrate that those who planted the bomb in Omagh will never succeed in their bid to drive people apart.

I visited Omagh in the wake of the explosion and saw for myself the terrible grief and devastation there. No words will ever be able to express the suffering that resulted from that evil deed. I saw people who had lost loved ones, whose lives would never be the same again. People who knew that those they cared for would never recover from their horrific injuries. I saw the emergency workers who will carry with them always the hellish sights they encountered on that horrific day, yet who worked so tirelessly and so selflessly to save life and to comfort the wounded.

But even in those blackest of black days, when one could perhaps be forgiven for despairing utterly, I saw the powerful impact people pulling together could have.

I will always remember during my visit how, as we grieved with the victims of the bomb, I was hugged by a DUP Assembly man - a gesture that spoke more than any number of words could, and one from which I drew great comfort.

I will never forget standing side by side with David Trimble in Buncrana on the sad afternoon of the funerals of Oran Doherty, Shaun McLoughlin and James Baker. Although we came from very different backgrounds, on that awful day, as two human beings, as parents, we shared the same feelings.

The people of Omagh and of Tyrone, and the others who endured so much suffering - in Spain and in Donegal - steadfastly refused to allow hatred to enter their hearts. In their dignity and courage in the face of the outrage committed against them they gave inspiration to us all.

That for me is the lesson of Omagh - not what can be brought about by hate - for we all know how destructive that can be - but what can be achieved by love, tolerance, respect and working together.

In building a future together for all the people who live on this island, we must never listen to the voices of hate, to the people who would seek to cause division and destruction, to the people who prefer the certainties of the past rather than the challenges of the future.

We must learn to become friends not only with the people that we find easiest to understand, but with those who come from a different background, community or culture. Listening carefully to what they have to say. Striving to understand their point of view, their needs.

I believe that the Good Friday Agreement offers great hope for the future. Not just because it represents the common ground reached after a great deal of effort, but because its sends out a clear message that our future must be built on partnership, equality and mutual respect.

The parties that reached agreement in April recognised the deep legacy of the tragedies of our past. But they agreed that, while we will never forget those who have died or been injured or their families, the way in which we can best honour them is through a fresh start. A new beginning in which we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance and mutual trust.

The Agreement recognises the need for reconciliation and, in particular, that a peaceful and just society

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would be a true memorial to the victims of violence.

I want to record my own deep appreciation of the work that many organisations are carrying out in the field of reconciliation and in promoting better community relations. As the Good Friday Agreement points out, such work has a vital role to play in consolidating peace and political agreement.

We have experienced too much division, too much hate and too much destruction. We need to grow together as a community and put the divisions of the past behind us. Reconciliation is a prerequisite to true stability and political accommodation.

Our politicians, North and South, are now working extremely hard to implement the Good Friday Agreement, to live up that commitment. In doing so they are working for all of us - implementing an Agreement that voters throughout this island endorsed in the referendums in May. We should take this opportunity to wish them well in their important work. They will have long and difficult days in the months ahead and will require the same courage, vision and leadership that allowed them to reach agreement on Good Friday. We should all do whatever we can to support and help them in their difficult journey.

But we must not leave them to travel that road on their own. However hard they work, they cannot ensure by themselves that a lasting peace will take hold in Ireland unless each one of us is prepared to do what we can to create a new society in which peace can grow. While we cannot undo our past or rewrite our history, working together we can shape and mould a different future

All of you, who are young and facing what will hopefully be a bright future, have the most to gain from a lasting peace. For in years to come, it will be you, young people from North and South, who will reap the harvest from the seeds of hope that are sown today.

People of my generation longed for the opportunity that now presents itself - for the first time in many years we have a chance for a long, lasting peace built on real respect for each other. I hope that when you are older and looking back on your lives you will be able to say that you did all that you could to make that chance a reality.

I hope that people of your generation will be the last in Ireland to ever experience the dreadful consequences of the divisions of our past. I hope that you will be able to say that you were the first generation to build bridges between our two great traditions, that you came to know, to respect and to like each other. I hope that under your guardianship, peace will put down roots and will be able to grow and thrive.

As President, I hope that, whatever your religious or political background, you will all feel part of this new beginning and will be able to proclaim in the words of the poet John Hewitt: 'This is my country, nowhere else'.

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