

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/105/726
Creation Date(s):	12 October 1984
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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S. 11575

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Embargo: 8.30 p.m., 12 October, 1984.

Remarks by the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald, T.D.
at the opening of the Annual Conference of the Irish
Association for Cultural, Economic and Social Relations
at the Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire on
12 October, 1984.

The horror of this morning's events is still upon us. When something like this happens, the Irish people set aside all feelings of ideology or political conviction or inherited resentment and we share unreservedly in the trauma of our British neighbours. We share in their relief at the survival unharmed of their Prime Minister, their outrage and sorrow at the killings and maimings, their stout determination that democracy would not be deflected by terror. The IRA seek to divide the Irish and British people: they have only succeeded by their attempted massacre in Brighton in creating a fresh impulse of solidarity between us and in reinforcing our common will to defeat their own evil.

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There is however one particular shade to our feeling today which is unique to those of the Irish nationalist tradition. I mean of course our deep anger at the arrogance of the Provisional IRA in doing these things in the name of our tradition, in the name of our aspiration, in the name of our legitimacy. We know in a special way that what they are seeking is domination, domination won through the corruption of our nationalist heritage and self-esteem and through the destruction of our democratic values.

They are also determined to prevent the British and Irish Governments creating new structures in which the condition of the Northern nationalist minority - those hitherto excluded from any real sense of belonging within the arrangements that exist in Ireland - could be transformed in such a way as to give hope to that community for the very first time ever. So much for the Provisional IRA's pretended commitment to the Northern minority. Their real commitment is to scuttle the efforts of this Irish Government on behalf of the minority, so admirably and consistently pursued by Peter Barry with the full support of the Irish Government. They would keep the minority languishing in misery until they have reduced the will of the Irish people at large to resist them. This they will not succeed in doing if only because each one of their actions reinforces our will to resist them.

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Our will to resist the tyranny of the Provisionals will not diminish as the emotions of today's events are calmed. Our determination is stronger because it is backed by the people, backed by their ever-growing desire for peace and for a just and workable future. The map of that future has been drawn in the central section of the Report of the New Ireland Forum, the Realities and the Requirements which together form the framework of a new Ireland. This will involve giving to the nationalists a sense of belonging and participating and of real security for the first time, giving to the unionists a sense of real reassurance for the first time and creating for our two islands for the first time a framework of enduring friendship and peace. These goals remain very difficult to achieve but they are no longer beyond our collective competence. This morning's carnage has, in my strong conviction, served only to reinforce the growing determination of the people of Great Britain and Ireland that we are in this together and that the will of the people - not that of the evil bombers - will prevail and endure.