

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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ADDRESS BY THE TANAISTE AND LEADER OF THE LABOUR PARTY, DICK SPRING, T.D.,  
TO THE NEW IRELAND FORUM ON 2 MAY 1984.

For eleven months now, the Parties in the Forum have been engaged in a unique process - a process aimed at fostering a climate in which lasting peace and stability on this island can be encouraged. The background against which this process began was a stark one.

Violence on our island has cost us much, and achieved us nothing. The cost of that violence, in terms of shattered lives and families, has contributed to an alienation that is growing steadily. Even in purely financial terms, the cost of violence has sorely inhibited social and economic progress all over this island. For many people - even for many young people who deserve the best life we can give them - violence has become an end in itself and a way of life.

Into that background we have sought to inject an element of hope. The combined presence of the constitutional nationalist Parties in the Forum has been of immense significance, even though, given the awful seriousness of the situation, there are many who would argue that this coming together of all who believed in the nationalist aspiration was long overdue.

In the process that we started those eleven months ago, we have tried to develop an understanding that there are real fears, real anxieties, among both traditions in Northern Ireland. We have tried to develop an openness to those fears and anxieties - and a determination to meet them in what we have proposed today.

It is of course a source of regret to all of us that those whose beliefs and persuasions are not ours did not consider it in their best interests to engage in dialogue with us. Even though they did not come to join us, and even though this Report is the pronouncement of nationalist Parties, I hope - and am confident - that its openness, its sincerity, and its total commitment to political progress through participation and cooperation, will lead to a willingness by all who read it - and particularly the Unionist people to look afresh at the possibility of a fruitful dialogue.

All of us who have participated in this Forum are looking now for progress. We are convinced that the dialogue we have begun, and the process of change to which we have committed ourselves, must find a response. That response must be based on generosity, and it must be based on a recognition that the cycle of fear and hatred on this island can only be broken by the active participation of Britain, together with us, and the people of both traditions in Northern Ireland.

Before concluding, I too want to say words of thanks. I want to thank first the leaders of the other Parties in the Forum with whom I have worked closely in this time, and all of the members of their delegations; and I particularly want to thank the Chairman, Dr. O'hEocha, whose patience and wisdom have contributed much to our progress.

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I want, on behalf of my delegation as well as my own behalf, to thank the Secretariat and staff, all of whose functions, from major to minor, were carried out in an impeccable way. Personally, I want to thank the members of my own delegation, whose commitment and insight were of enormous benefit, not just to me but I think to the Forum as a whole. And I want finally to thank especially those hundreds of groups and individuals who submitted to the Forum their hopes, aspirations, and ideas.

Chairman, we will move now into a new phase. The theme which we must seek in the months and years ahead must be one of hope. In the consensus which we have endeavoured to forge, there are I believe, the seeds of that hope. It is up to all of us, here and on the whole island, to provide the fertile soil, and the nourishment, for those seeds to grow.