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[Mr. John Hume \(Foyle\)](#)

May I express to the Prime Minister and to Mr. Reynolds my deep appreciation for the enormous amount of energy that they have put into trying to grasp the hope of peace—a hope which is shared by the masses of people on both islands? Having read the joint declaration, I think that it is one of the most comprehensive declarations that has been made about British-Irish relations in the past 70 years. My appeal to all sections of our people is to read the entire statement in full and to have no knee-jerk reactions but to study it carefully and in full before responding.

As the House will be aware, it has been the consistent position of my party that the British-Irish quarrel of old, the quarrel of sovereignty, has changed fundamentally in the evolution of the new interdependent and post-nationalist Europe of which we are members, but the legacy of that past is the deeply divided people. I welcome the fact that the declaration identifies the problem as the deeply divided people of Ireland. I also welcome the fact that it recognises that that division can be healed only by agreement, and by an agreement that earns the allegiance and agreement of all our traditions and respects their diversity. I welcome also the fact that the Government have committed themselves to promoting such agreement and to encouraging such agreement, and whatever form that agreement takes, the Government will endorse.

Does the Prime Minister agree that the joint declaration is a challenge to all parties to come to the table in a totally peaceful atmosphere to begin the very difficult process—it will be a difficult process—of reaching agreement? If it takes place in a peaceful atmosphere, we will have much more chance of reaching such an agreement. My appeal to everyone who comes to that table is to come armed only with the strength of their convictions and not with any form of coercion or physical force.

Let us remember at this time that it is people who have rights, not territory, and that humanity transcends nationality. May the House share with me at this moment the hope of all our people that today will be the first major step on a road that will remove for ever the gun and the bomb from our small island of people.

Hon. Members Hear, hear.

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