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NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

26 September 1988

**SPEECH GIVEN TODAY BY SECRETARY OF STATE, RT HON TOM KING MP,
AT A LUNCH HOSTED BY THE INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS**

The evil of terrorism is not just in the awful deeds that it commits, but also because all too often it dominates the news to the exclusion of all else, and massively distorts the picture that people elsewhere have of Northern Ireland. So many visitors to Northern Ireland, whether Businessmen, foreign politicians, journalists, academics, say to me "why does nobody tell us it's like this, and so much better than the television pictures make us believe". In this last year the whole world was shocked by Enniskillen, and the appalling murder of the two corporals and rightly so, and yet very few would dream that this last year has seen some of the most significant achievements ever on the economic front, £300m of new IDB investment, 10,000 fall in unemployment.

A record number of new jobs have been promoted by the IDB and LEDU in the past year and there are encouraging prospects for more. But if economic progress has been encouraging, political progress has been much less so. And yet we all know that better security and economic and political progress are all interlinked. Of course the ultimate responsibility rests with the Government, and myself as Secretary of State. I accept that, fully. But others have their contribution to make as well, and success will depend on the widest possible commitment throughout the community.

There is no future for Northern Ireland as an economic wasteland; no future for Northern Ireland through terrorism; and no future in a political vacuum. We need action on all three fronts, and I want to make clear how our policies are directed in these three areas.

First, I should like to speak about security policy. The additional weapons from Col Gaddafi together with an even greater callousness in their use pose immediate challenges and focus attention on the response that this democracy should make. We have no choice when faced with terrorism and violence: they can never be allowed to triumph. We can never be in doubt about that, and least of all after the terrible events of this year. The pathetic apology when two elderly good neighbours get killed by the bomb meant for

somebody else, is but the latest in a stream of equally lame excuses, not one of which admits that bombs are always meant to kill, that inevitably sometimes other people will get killed, and that terrorists are prepared to let that happen.

Nor is it just the excuses that are threadbare, but the very basis on which this whole awful campaign has been fought is as well.

The great fallacy is to talk about British withdrawal without even stopping to accept who the British are. There are 1 million Unionists who are British and intend to remain so, and yet the whole republican case is to pretend either that they do not exist, or that their beliefs are somehow easily set aside, and not as deeply held as Irish republican views. What has destroyed totally this argument is Article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The British Government has always maintained that the status of Northern Ireland must be determined by the wishes of a majority in Northern Ireland. What the Agreement marks is the acceptance by the Irish Government as well of this position. And what the election last year in the Republic showed was that the parties who supported that got 98% of the votes. On what authority, on whose behalf is this evil campaign of murder being waged?

The truth is that the whole IRA campaign is based not on self determination, but on crushing the democratic process, and smashing anybody who does not agree with them. The IRA wants to make people think that anything would be better than continued killing. And the IRA's "anything" is a United Ireland dominated by the IRA. Everybody in the island of Ireland knows what sort of regime that would be. It will not happen. The Government of the United Kingdom, the people of the United Kingdom, most of all amongst them, the people of Northern Ireland I will not allow it to happen, nor will the Republic be prepared to see their institutions taken over at the point of a gun. What a tragedy that, 20 years on, the terrorists have still not understood this.

Terrorism will be opposed and resisted at every opportunity .
Renewed terrorism will simply increase that resolve.

Our weapons, and our ways, cannot, and indeed must not, however be those of the terrorist. To stoop to the level of the terrorist, would be wrong in itself. And it would not work. We must continue to deal with terrorist acts as the criminal activities they are.

The framework within which the police and the rest of the security forces work is one governed by the rule of law. Essentially this framework is the same as it is in the rest of the United Kingdom. Terrorists are not tried for their opinions, nor are they convicted on suspicion. Our system of law and order has to take account of the reality of terror and the intimidation which it brings. But the system itself remains the one on which our society insists.

At the same time we are determined to take every step to combat terrorism as effectively as possible. I have been reviewing with the Prime Minister and other colleagues a number of matters in this respect and on which action is in hand, but on which I do not propose to go into detail at present. But tackling the threat of terrorism is only one of the elements in the Government's policy. The Government's broad aim is to bring good government to Northern Ireland and to build a stable, prosperous community here. And this means economic and social progress as well.

On the economic front the progress has been encouraging and the future prospects could be very good. Even with the continuing severely depressed situation in shipbuilding the good performance of Northern Ireland industry and commerce has continued. The effect of 8 years continual growth in the United Kingdom economy was slower to reach Northern Ireland but is definitely having its impact now. Unemployment is down 17,500 from its peak, and the level of new investment has significantly increased. The improvement is very noticeable in the increase in investment by existing Northern Ireland companies, the level of enquiries from overseas and British companies looking at Northern Ireland as a possible place for investment and the increasing activity in the retailing sector. This isn't happening by accident, but for two powerful reasons, in particular. For overseas companies, 1992 makes it vital for them to be established within the EEC, and Northern Ireland is a very

competitive place to be within the Community. For British companies, particularly in the South East, rapid growth in the economy have led to high costs of industrial land, shortage of skilled labour, and higher overhead costs. On top of these problems, there is about to be a sharp fall in the number of 16 year olds available for work. What a contrast for Northern Ireland at this time, but what an opportunity as well. And that is why there is the best opportunity, perhaps ever, to make a fundamental improvement in the job prospects for people in Northern Ireland.

Our economic policy is to create the climate in which individual businesses have the incentive to grow, and to give them every encouragement. We encourage them in particular to look at overseas markets and to assist them with schemes to strengthen management, quality, design and exports. In the encouragement we give, we want at all times to hear the views of industry and commerce, to ensure that the help is given in the most effective way we can.

We are not featherbedding companies nor trying to shield them from world competition, but offering every encouragement and assistance to go and compete and win. And what is clear is that more and more companies are realising that they can.

That's why privatisation is important as well. For trading companies public ownership has never been a long term solution. As the Chancellor has said "Not so long ago the question was, why privatise a state owned industry? Now thanks to the manifest success of privatisation, the question is, why should any industry stay in the state owned sector?"

The silliest remark of all is to suggest that because we want Northern Ireland industrial policy to follow the same lines as GB and to gain the same benefits, that this is a policy of economic withdrawal. It is so silly that I hardly bothered to mention it, and yet there might be a few people ready to believe it, and it could then be damaging and mischievous, so I mention it only to point out what rubbish it is.

The third element is our policy for political development . Stability and reconciliation cannot be imposed: they can only come from a co-operative effort. It is only through political dialogue that we stand any chance of producing an understanding among the people of Northern Ireland as to how this part of the United Kingdom should be governed, and as to how the people, unionist and nationalist, can live together.

That is the objective of Her Majesty's Government, to establish a basis for government in the Province that is fair and just, that respects the rights of a majority, while ensuring fair treatment for minority views as well. That is the duty and responsibility of the United Kingdom Government because Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom by the express desire of a significant majority of its people. That is based on democratic choice and not on some special economic or strategic reason, as some suggest, for Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom. On the economic point, although the Northern Ireland economy has improved, gaining as it does from the growth of the Great Britain economy over recent years, nonetheless it still remains a substantial recipient rather than a contributor to the United Kingdom exchequer, as indeed is also true of some other parts of the United Kingdom. On the strategic side, this thought owes more to the U Boat mentality of the Great War and 1939, than the nuclear submarine age of inter-continental missiles.

All of which confirms what is the truth, that there is no secret economic or strategic reason, but simply that Northern Ireland position as part of the United Kingdom is based entirely and clearly on the self determination of the people of NI. It is the firm commitment of the United Kingdom Government and Parliament to support that right, it is the commitment also of the Irish Government: and all the major parties in the Republic to do likewise.

This shows clearly what is then the objective of the terrorists, which is to seek by force to override that right to self determination of the majority and to impose their minority view.

But if the present and clear wish of the majority is to remain as part of the United Kingdom, that makes it essential that we work with the Northern Ireland constitutional parties on the arrangements for government within the Province within the United Kingdom. That is why it is now urgent for politicians to start talking and other leaders in the community to make their contribution too.

Only the terrorists gain if the communities leaders will not talk to each other, and cannot find ways of addressing their shared problems. The terrorist thrives on dispute and dismay. But if the 2 communities here can make progress in healing the wounds between them, can start to edge towards working together, the irrelevance of terrorism as a way forward becomes obvious; more important, it also becomes obvious that terrorism is an ineffective way forward.

If the political, social, religious, business and industrial leaders of this community can find ways of developing a dialogue here, this would simultaneously raise the prospect of a move towards real stability. We need to show the terrorists that the recent increase in violence has led only to yet more determined efforts on the part of the political parties here to work together.

I have already invited the main constitutional parties to meet me to discuss the current security situation. That is the most immediate issue. But separately, and soon, we need to discuss the political issues that are of concern to the people of Northern Ireland, and to find ways forward for dealing with them.

The British Government's position has not changed. We believe that only by involving local politicians of both communities in the ways in which decisions are taken and power is exercised can a solution to the wider problems be found. Northern Ireland needs the confidence that comes from a successful internal understanding. The Government believes the political representatives of Northern

Ireland have a clear choice: Either they can continue to argue amongst themselves exercising marginal power over the welfare of their constituents, and they can continue to make demands which they know will never be acceptable to the other side. Or they can sit down together and agree on ways in which they can have real influence in Northern Ireland. This would marginalise the paramilitaries on both sides and set Northern Ireland on the road to economic stability and social cohesion. I hope that they will see this, as I do, as an opportunity to show that the agenda is set by the elected political representatives of the community here, not by the terrorists.

In a very real sense, and not withstanding the present background of the security scene, this is a time of real opportunity for Northern Ireland. There is a real chance to make a fundamental improvement in the Northern Ireland economy and to see a much better hope for people and particularly young people to get good jobs. The terrorists will try to blight their hopes and destroy these better prospects, the politicians may stay trapped in their entrenched positions and let the chances pass them by. I hope the people of the Province, and particularly the parents who care about a better future for their children will make their voices heard, and not let terrorism or the political vacuum prevail. There can be a much better future, if we all determine to take it.