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March 13, 1986

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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT
ST. PATRICK'S DAY, 1986

St. Patrick's Day is a time for joy and celebration, a day we recognize the many achievements, sung and unsung, of the Irish men and women who have made this a better and happier world. Today we remember especially the immigrants who came to these shores to make a new beginning. Some of them were so poor they left their homeland with little more than the clothes on their backs. But they brought with them something more valuable -- their hopes and dreams, their love of liberty, and their unconquerable spirit.

St. Patrick's Day is also a time for reflecting on life today on the Emerald Isle, the ancestral home of over 40 million Americans. In the last two decades, the northern part of the island has been wracked by senseless violence. Political and religious differences, exacerbated by unfavorable economic conditions, have resulted in the wanton murder of hundreds of men, women, and children and the terrorizing of an entire population.

But on this St. Patrick's Day we can all be grateful that a ray of hope has begun to shine. In a courageous move, the Prime Ministers of Ireland and the United Kingdom decided the time had come to give new impetus to the search for peace in Northern Ireland. Out of their discussions emerged a new approach in which the British and Irish Governments jointly committed themselves to reconciliation between Northern Ireland's two

~~alienated~~ ^{divided} communities. This Anglo-Irish Accord, signed by Prime Ministers Thatcher and FitzGerald on November 15th last year and quickly ratified by their parliaments, has received an enthusiastic bipartisan reception in the U.S. Congress. We are now working with Congress to find ways in which the United States can help.

In determining the nature of any U.S. Government aid, we must bear in mind that the agenda and timetable for progress in that troubled area are not for us to set. Those directly concerned, the people of both Irish traditions, will chart the course which will, we pray, lead to reconciliation in that troubled land.

Concerned Americans can do two important things to help make reconciliation a reality. First, the key to progress in Northern Ireland and in the Republic is a strong, growing economy -- and if Americans "think Ireland" when we plan our travel and investments, we'll be making a contribution to Irish economic growth. Second, Americans should not give either financial or moral support to Irish terrorists -- any Irish terrorists. Such support is misguided. We cannot permit individuals, for their own evil ends, to snuff out hope by the use of violence.

On this St. Patrick's Day let all Americans and people of goodwill everywhere honor the Irish by helping them build a peaceful and prosperous future.

The people of America and Ireland have long held each other in high esteem. We hold a special place in each others' hearts.

And on this very special St. Patrick's Day we extend to all our greetings and goodwill.