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CC A-I SECTION
Mr R O'Brien

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Brief description of material: EXTRACTS FROM DEBATE FOLLOWING
SECRETARY OF STATE'S STATEMENT ON
THE COMMISSION TODAY

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Mr. Molyneux: Might I explain that my colleagues and I who represent Northern Ireland, we feel that in view of the gravity of the issues that it would be utterly futile to deal with these grave matters by means of superficial exchanges across the floor of the House.

Mr. King: I appreciate and I certainly don't dissent from the Right Honourable member in expressing his concern about the gravity of the position and I obviously do share that concern that I think it must be a matter for regret if it is not in this House of Commons and this House of Commons (Hear Hear) In this House of the Parliament of the union that we do actually stand together, that we do actually discuss these issues but we do actually consult together to try and bring the real enemy that we face which is not the matter of political division but the real evil of terrorism that we conserve our action against.

Mr. Biggs-Davidson: Many of us who have opposed and do oppose the Anglo-Irish Agreement with which we fully support his appeal to everyone in Northern Ireland to support the security forces at this grave time. Could I ask my Right Honourable friend whether instead of recriminating over transgressions of the border by the security forces of the Republic and the United Kingdom, the two sovereign Governments should not now agree that free movement across the border by those forces in pursuit of terrorism. After so many years is it not time that the British arms forces started talking and working directly with the Irish army and Air Corps.

Mr. King: My honourable friend knows as well as anybody in this House some of the sensitivities around this matter. Can I say to him that it is very much my hope that we can in working together with the Irish Government and in passing may I say how much I appreciated the technical unqualified support that we have received both from the Taoiseach in his statement and from the Foreign Minister, Mr. Lenihan who have promised every available support in bringing the perpetrators of this crime and others to justice, and to those, I have to say this, to those

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who believe that there is no possibility of cooperation, that seems to me to be a policy of despair. I believe that the recognition throughout the island of Ireland of the damage that terrorism is doing, maybe in terms of physical outrage in the North, undoubtedly in terms of economic damage and suffering in the South, that there is a determination to rid the island for once and for all of the scourge of terrorism. And I do say my honourable friend without going into detail that I take very seriously the points that he makes and I very much hope that we can make some progress around the issues that he mentioned.

Mr. Alton: All parts of this House must be associated with the strongest possible condemnation, the hateful and cowardly outrage that took place over this weekend and I'd like to associate my right honourable and honourable friends at what has been said. Some of the Secretary of State accepts that the continued violence demonstrates the fear that extreme elements to the Agreement does represent a way in which majority and minority traditions may gradually fulfil their aspirations and retain justice. Isn't it therefore vital that the whole House unequivocally reiterates its determination to maintain the Agreement. Will the Secretary of State consider building on the Agreement by establishing a joint security commission and wouldn't he agree that it would be very helpful if Cardinal O Fiaich and politicians from the nationalist tradition should now offer unambiguous support for the RUC and encourage Catholics both to support and to join the Force.

Mr. King: Can I say to the honourable gentleman that I appreciate very much the remarks that he has made. And can I say that whatever views others may hold about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, from a political point of view, there is absolutely no question that the IRA fear it very much indeed because they see that the recourse of the border which exists with the very length of it, with the existence of the two jurisdictions itself provides that advantage which the terrorists can exploit and both Governments are very well aware of that and can be

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exploited incidentally in both directions. Against that background that the IRA do feel that we might succeed effectively in denying them that resource. Of course its not something that is going to be achieved overnight and those who suggest it might be the case grossly underestimate or underrate the skill and cunning of some of the terrorist organisations that we face. And that would be the greatest mistake.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Is it not immensely depressing to hear the right honourable gentleman and member of the Lagan Valley as saying that he wishes to stand aside from these events, these terrible events in his own province (hear hear) and is that not an abdication of responsibility which is wholly to be condemned. Secondly would my right honourable friend agree that there is a feeling in this country that the cooperation between the RUC and other forces and the Garda and the military forces in the South is not as good as it should be, is not as good as it was promised and could have prevented this trajedy?

Mr. King: Well, I'm not sure that I could go so far as to endorse the latter point my honourable friend, but can I say that we certainly see the potential for developing further the cooperation between the RUC and the Garda. Some people talk as though its just a question of signing some document and you will get instant improvement in cooperation. It is something that has to be built upon, I draw on the professional advice of the Chief Constable of the RUC, who goes no further than to say that in his judgment it provides the best opportunity for the development of closer cooperation and the best opportunity for dealing with terrorism in a more effective way. That's the honest and truthful appraisal of the situation, there is nothing on a plate but it does provide that opportunity and anybody who really believes we are going to make a more effective response against the terrorists by not working in close cooperation and harmony with the Irish Government, I think misunderstands the reality of the situation. And could I simply add also my honourable friend that I think it may have been a

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misunderstanding, I hope that I misunderstood slightly what the right honourable gentleman from the Lagan Valley meant in which I think he was implying and some of my right honourable friends may not have understood this but it wasn't that he declined to use this Chamber to discuss this matter, but that this occasion of this particular question/exchange was not the occasion he would choose.

Mr. Mallon: Speaking as the member in whose constituency this terrible deed took place I'd like to on behalf of my party add our condolences to the family and indeed to the families of all of the people in the North of Ireland who have suffered in the recent past. Could I ask the Secretary of State to confirm that there are two things which the provisional IRA fear most, the first is the very close cooperation between the British Government and the Irish Government in the search to bring about peace and stability in Northern Ireland, and the second is that the nationalist community, the Catholic community in the North of Ireland will be winged away from support for them and leave them isolated, and would he further confirm that one of the aims of the Provisional IRA at the present moment is to provoke the type of punitive reaction which would prevent that happening and could he confirm that his Government through himself will be very careful indeed not to play into their hands by doing that.

Mr. King: Well obviously we are anxious to build the support of the minority community in Northern Ireland and the closer identification with the administration and security efforts in the province and that is very important indeed, and I am sure that the recent tragedies, that there will be very many in the nationalist community who will have learned yet further that a totally unacceptable nature and viciousness of the terror attack. It is worth remarking for whoever detonated that bomb had no scruples about the ~~other~~ accidents that they might have caused at that time and no matter how horrific the casualties of Lord Justice Gibson, not only the Rugby players who were travelling South, not only the girls who appeared on television, the fact that there was a bus with 50 school children taking

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part in a source exchange travelling North. That those are the people who had compunction or scruples whatsoever, no matter how much suffering they may cause, those are the people who have no promise whatsoever for the future of the people anywhere in the island of Ireland and deserve the total condemnation of us all.

Mr. Marlowe: I'm sure the whole House has the feeling that if this surge of violence were to take place in the United, in England, there would be a public outcry demanding much stronger measures than we have at the moment. Can I follow the point made by the Right Honorable Gentlemen, the member from Barnsley, that perhaps my Right Honorable friend could give more scope to the security forces to put the wind, let's say, up the terrorists, many of whom, if not most of whom, are male. It would seem that the risks to terrorists of terrorist acts are currently insufficient.

The, my Honorable friend will have heard the answer I gave the Right Honorable member from Barnsley, there is no question that now it would be wrong not to recognise the true facts of the situation which is that early in the year there was actually some reduction in casualties, but certainly now a very serious increase, but overall the level of violence is quite unacceptable and the level of suffering is quite unacceptable as well. But I am looking very seriously to ways in which any proposals that the security forces may put, for ways in which their efforts, which we back wholeheartedly, can be even more effective.