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**Speech by the Taoiseach,  
Mr. Charles J. Haughey, T.D.,  
at a function hosted by  
Senator Edward Kennedy  
in the Kennedy Library, Boston  
on Friday, 22nd April, 1988**

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An Taoiseach,  
Charles J. Haughey T.D.  
President of Fianna Fáil.

It is a privilege and pleasure for me to address you in the Kennedy Library — surrounded by distinguished friends of Ireland and by memories of the most distinguished Irish-American of our time, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Next June, it will be 25 years since President Kennedy came to Ireland. No one who had the good fortune to be in Ireland during that time will ever forget the impact of his visit. His boundless energy and personal magnetism, his easy, relaxed engaging personality, as much as the high office he held, made John Fitzgerald Kennedy for many Irish people the fulfilment of an ancient hope. Old emotions and folk memories stirred deeply. He symbolised for many the fact that the long night of suffering and heartbreak seemed to be over and that a new day had dawned for the Irish.

They reacted to his presence among them with unforgettable demonstrations of their affection and admiration.

President Kennedy came to Ireland at a moment when the optimism and confidence which he epitomised corresponded with the national mood. Ireland had already entered a period of sustained expansion which was transforming the country economically, socially and psychologically. Three years later the census of 1966 showed the first increase in our population since 1841. In the years that followed, Ireland developed and the mood of national optimism was reflected in a sustained growth in population, a remarkable revival of interest in our cultural, artistic and musical heritage, a pride in our past and a confidence in our future as a nation.

I was present at that moment in history when President Kennedy, on 25th June, 1963, addressed a joint session of our two Houses, Dáil and Seanad Éireann. It was a brilliant speech, generous, witty, perceptive and profoundly moving. With characteristic generosity he acknowledged the achievements of an independent Ireland in words that thrilled and inspired us all.

John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy cared passionately about their country's place in the world and its international responsibilities. They also cared about social justice, peace and equity at home. They saw that political action was the indispensable means of achieving these. They understood very clearly that the basic principles of a modern democracy — government with the consent of the governed and equality of treatment and opportunity — were also the foundations of a peaceful, stable and just political society.

In the 1960s, as in the past, America and the American experience were to have an influence on events in Ireland. The American civil rights movement and its successes lent hope, example and an anthem to the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland. Bobby Kennedy was especially identified with the cause of civil rights and social justice in the United States as indeed is his son, Congressman Joe Kennedy, today.

Our host of this evening, Senator Edward Kennedy, has followed faithfully the political and humanitarian path which his distinguished brothers trod. It has fallen to Ted Kennedy and, more recently, to Congressman Joe Kennedy, to carry on a high tradition of public service to this great country and of sympathy and concern for the land of their forebears.

My Government is also committed to human rights and social justice everywhere in the world but especially in Northern Ireland. In pursuing that aim, we have engaged in a structured political dialogue with the Government of the United Kingdom. Since 1981 we have done so in the framework of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council and since 1985 through the structures provided by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. During all that time our friends in the United States have played their part by encouraging both governments to persevere in their efforts.

I would like to restate some of the basic principles to which the Irish Government adheres in this dialogue.

**First:** Peace and stability in Northern Ireland as well as reconciliation require that the substance of the issues at stake be addressed; that the problem be seen in the wider context of the sovereign nations involved; and that our aim should be a lasting solution and not just crisis management.

**Second:** Violence and terror have no place and no part to play in achieving peace, stability and reconciliation in Ireland. They have brought nothing but death and suffering to the people of Ireland.

**Third:** The basic truth must be faced and accepted that, as things stand, neither of the fundamental ingredients of democracy, consent and equality, are fully present in Northern Ireland. Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the island as a whole require that we accept each other's differences, acknowledge the validity of the two traditions in Ireland and the legitimacy of the rights and interests that

flow from these traditions. There must therefore be new wider political structures which will accommodate the two traditions, their aspirations and their loyalties. Peace and justice will not come within the existing framework.

We see in the United States an example of the extent to which the Irish, of all persuasions, have gladly accepted the values which underlie this society. They and the other nationalities and groups which compose this great Republic have proved that it is possible to share a common allegiance to the United States of America, while retaining those values, cultural and spiritual, which are distinctively their own. In Ireland we must build a national society to which the two traditions can give common allegiance while retaining their distinctive spiritual and cultural values which can only enrich our common heritage. We are confident that in this task we can count on America's and Irish America's encouragement and support.

There are few families who know more, from their own direct experience, than the Kennedys about the futility of political violence. Who better than the Kennedys can teach us about the art of politics or offer more inspiring profiles in courage and perseverance?

One of the concerns of the Kennedy brothers in pursuit of social justice and equity was reform of the immigration laws so as to permit fair and free access to those who wished to seek employment or to join their families in this country. The 1965 Act however had unintended consequences, one of which was to make it difficult for Irish people, when emigration resumed, legally to gain access to the United States. Senator Ted Kennedy has therefore joined with Senator Alan Simpson in tabling and securing successful passage of

President John F. Kennedy  
meeting with President  
Eamon DeValera in 1963.

legislation aimed at dealing with this situation. We look forward to the successful passage in the House of a similar Bill sponsored by two other good friends of Ireland, Congressman Brian Donnelly and Congressman Charles Schumer.

It is only when their status has been rectified that thousands of young Irish men and women will be in a position to make the same valuable contribution to American society that their forebears did. We see this improvement in their situation as a matter of urgent necessity.

As I said at the outset, it is a privilege and a pleasure to be here this evening. Senator Kennedy, you and your family have earned a rightful place in the esteem and affection of millions of Americans. You have earned the affection, esteem and gratitude of all those who are concerned about a peaceful future for all of Ireland and for all her people.

I am honoured, therefore, to accept this magnificent bust of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. It will remind us not only of his deep regard for the indissoluble ties of affection, kinship and mutual esteem which bind Ireland and America together, but also of his profoundly optimistic view of politics and human nature, his belief that political problems could and would in the end be solved by imagination, generosity, courage and goodwill.