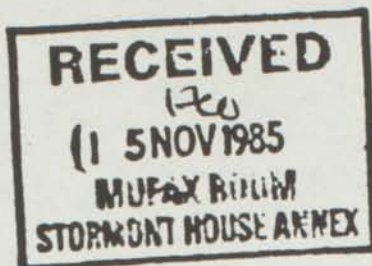


7/28



TRANSCRIPT OF A PRESS CONFERENCE

GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER

THE RT HON MARGARET THATCHER FRS MP

AND DR GARRET FITZGERALD THE TAOISEACH

AT BILLSBOROUGH CASTLE

ON

FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 1985

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Transcript by
JAMES LEE of:

PRESS CONFERENCE GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
 MRS. THATCHER, AND DR. GARRETT FITZGERALD,
 IRISH PRIME MINISTER, AT MILLSBOROUGH CASTLE,
 NORTHERN IRELAND, ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1985
 DELETED

PRIME MINISTER

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Dr. FitzGerald and I have today signed a serious and solemn agreement, which signifies the way ahead in relations between our two countries and towards peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

The Agreement has three main elements:

a preamble which includes our total rejection of violence and our recognition of the validity of both traditions in Northern Ireland;

an article in which the two governments affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of people of Northern Ireland, which recognises that the present wish of a majority is for no change and declares that if in the future a majority formally consent to a united Ireland, the two governments will support legislation accordingly;

and the third element: articles establishing a new intergovernmental conference concerned both with Northern Ireland and with relations between the two parts of Ireland.

The Irish Republic will be able to put forward views and

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proposals in the conference on stated aspects of Northern Ireland affairs, and determined efforts will be made to resolve any differences.

We shall also be putting forward views, in particular on cross-border cooperation and security, but also on economic, social and cultural matters, including the enhancement of cross-border cooperation in combatting terrorism.

Full responsibility for the decisions and administration of government will remain with the United Kingdom north of the border and with the Republic south of the border.

The conference will be serviced by a secretariat on a continuing basis.

We have also issued today a communique on our meeting which says that the new intergovernmental conference will concentrate in its initial meetings on relations between the security forces and the minority community in Northern Ireland, on ways of improving security cooperation between the two governments, and on seeking measures which would underline the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice.

By promoting peace and stability and by enhancing our cooperation against terrorism, the agreement will bring benefits to all the people of Northern Ireland. I hope that it will also open the way for moves towards devolution in Northern Ireland.

On behalf of the United Kingdom, I went into this agreement because I was not prepared to tolerate a situation of continuing violence. I want to offer hope to young people particularly that the cycle of violence will be broken.

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I believe in the Union and that it will last as long as the majority so wish. I point out that the legitimacy of the Unionist position has been recognised by the Republic in a formal international agreement.

Cooperation in the intergovernmental conference is a two-way street. We shall wish to pursue matters affecting the Republic in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, for instance, improved security cooperation and economic cooperation. The spirit of the agreement is not one of each interfering in the other's affairs; it is of both sides working together on problems which affect both the North and the Republic.

The agreement is a positive incentive to devolve government in Northern Ireland, because if a system of devolved government acceptable to both communities can be devised, then the matters with which the devolved government deals will be taken out of the hands of the intergovernmental conference. We shall be doing our utmost to achieve that devolved government.

To sum up: we entered into this agreement to defeat the men of violence and to bring peace and stability. We enter into this agreement in good faith. We shall do everything to make it succeed. Whether it works will depend also on the will of the people and I hope that they will seize the chance which the agreement gives. Indeed, we call on all people of good will to join us in building peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

Thank you!

DR. FITZGERALD

I would like, at the outset, to echo those concluding words of the Prime Minister.

Throughout these negotiations, the Irish Government's approach has been to seek ways of securing recognition of and respect for the rights and aspirations of both traditions in this island: a process which must of its nature contribute also to better relations between the peoples of Ireland and Britain.

A majority of Irish people share the aspiration to Irish unit to be achieved peacefully and by agreement. That is the Nationalist position. It is obvious that the British Prime Minister and I have come to these negotiations with different historical perspectives and as it were, with different title deeds, but we have been able to agree about what would and what would not happen in the future.

The agreement affirms clearly that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. The agreement recognises that the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is for no change. The agreement goes on to say that, if in the future, a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the fulfilment of the nationalist aspiration, the two governments will act to implement that wish by introducing and supporting legislation in their parliaments.

The agreement thus makes provision for the nationalist aspiration to unity in the only conditions in which the nationalist people of Ireland, the constitutional nationalists, seek or would accept this fulfilment - without violence and with the consent

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of a majority in Northern Ireland. The corollary of this is that the Northern Unionist have for the first time a commitment in the form of an international agreement that a change in the status of Northern Ireland such as would be involved in a move to Irish political unity would not take place without the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland.

On the Irish side, these negotiations were preceded by a process of consultation involving a review of traditional attitudes by the constitutional nationalist parties of this island through the New Ireland Forum. The Forum's Report provided a basis for the Irish Government's approach to this negotiation. The agreement, as it has now emerged, is fully consistent with the principles proposed in Chapter 5, paragraph 2 of that Report.

(Irish)

As I have just said in Irish, our purpose to secure equal recognition and respect for the two identities in Northern Ireland. Nationalists can now raise their heads knowing that their position is - and is seen to be - on an equal footing with that of members of the Unionist community.

As the result, we will be creating conditions in which the Nationalist community in the north can more readily identify with the structures of government in a way that will help peace and stability to emerge in this island. For the Unionist community, who have suffered the most tragic and repulsive onslaught on their right to life and wellbeing, this agreement offers a way forward toward the restoration of normal life without

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violence or fear. . This agreement thus involves no abandonment of nationalist aspirations, nor any threat to unionist rights, but it does offer a prospect for progress toward peace and justice for northern nationalists and of peace and stability for northern unionists.

There are no victors nor any losers, but if what has been agreed is implemented in full good faith - as I believe and know it will be - all of the people of Northern Ireland will gain; so indeed will the peoples of the rest of Ireland and Great Britain who, though not on the scale of Northern Ireland, have suffered from terrorism and who for many years have had to carry together a heavy burden of security costs and in the case of my state, have also suffered economic losses.

As a person with close friendships on the nationalist side and close family bonds on the unionist side, I want to address myself directly to the people of Northern Ireland. To nationalists and unionists alike, I appeal: look at and evaluate this agreement, not as some people in both communities who are committed to maintaining divisions and hatreds will attempt to portray it, but for what it is!

JOHN SIMPSON (BBC TELEVISION NEWS, LONDON)

May I ask both the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister: in the past, it has only been possible to get a form of words, an agreement, by being ambiguous about some of the central elements about where these agreements go to. Do you think this time you have managed to avoid ambiguity, or are there all sorts of things which both of you, and both your governments, and both your oppositions perhaps, will interpret in different ways?

DR. FITZGERALD

I cannot speak for anything other than my Government, but I believe that what we have here is clear and unambiguous. We have tried to avoid any question of ambiguity, because I think it is important - if people are to have security, if they are to feel safe - they must know with certainty what is involved, and I believe this agreement has that particular characteristic, which I think is of great importance.

PRIME MINISTER

We have tried to make it clear. If you have any questions on ambiguity, perhaps you would ask them now and we might be able to resolve them, but it is meant to be clear.

QUESTION

The agreement talks about the devolving of powers within Northern Ireland. To whom will the powers be devolved?

PRIME MINISTER

But as you know, it has been the tradition in Northern Ireland that they have their own devolved Assembly. So far, we have not been able to reach agreement between the two communities as to an acceptable form of devolution. We hope that that will come about. When it comes about, they will deal with most of the matters under the agreement. As they take over the matters at present dealt with under the intergovernmental conference, so the intergovernmental conference will have fewer matters to deal with and gradually, the people of Northern Ireland will be responsible for their own future under the devolved arrangement. We have not yet been able to agree to the kind of devolved arrangement. We hope that this agreement will gradually lead to such a devolved arrangement.

BRIAN FARROW ("TODAY, TONIGHT", RTE)

Could I ask a three-part question to the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister:

First, in terms of the nationalist population, and particularly those who feel oppressed, for instance, by the special court system, what is here in this agreement in the short-term for them?

For the unionist population, particularly for their leaders, some of whom were protesting out here this morning, what is there for them?

And in terms of the obligation of the conference to make determined efforts to resolve differences, how binding is that obligation?

DR. FITZGERALD

Perhaps I will try and answer that first.

So far as the courts are concerned, the communiqué makes clear what is in fact in the agreement, that we will be seeking measures at the initial meeting, indeed, of the conference; we shall give substantial expression to the aim of underlining the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice. How that is to be done will be a matter for the conference.

With regard to the unionist population, I think - and I hope I have made it clear - it is clear in the agreement - that it is set out here in a binding way that Irish political unity would come about only with the consent of a majority; and that ought to be reassurance, just as the recognition of and the maintenance of the aspiration to unity and the commitment of both governments, including the British Government, to the introduction and support of legislation for Irish unity if a majority in its favour emerges, should be a reassurance to everybody of the nationalist tradition in this island.

The obligation to resolve differences is one that both governments, in good faith, will take with the utmost seriousness. We recognise that any failure to do that would be immensely damaging and our commitment is total and I believe the good faith on both sides is total.

PRIME MINISTER

I think perhaps I could add to that reply, you asked especially what was in it for the unionists, and I would like to respond to your question. First, the assurance of no

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change in the status of Northern Ireland without their consent. And secondly, this is the first time the legitimacy of the unionist position has been recognised by the Republic in a formal international agreement. Third, increased cooperation with the South on security and other matters. Fourth, support for devolution from both governments, and as that becomes more and more effective, so the intergovernmental conference becomes less and less significant and the peoples of Northern Ireland together make the decisions about their future; and you will have noticed that in the communique it is the intention of the Republic to accede to the European Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. That matter has, of course, to go before their Dail. So there is a great deal in it, in addition to the hope of breaking the violence and therefore living lives in peace and stability, which is perhaps the most important thing of all.

And I would just like to take this opportunity, particularly on what has been a rather sad day for the security forces, to pay tribute to their most excellent work and their abiding loyalty.

EAMONN MALLEY (DOWNTOWN RADIO, BELFAST)

Prime Minister Thatcher, can you put your hand on your heart and say that there is no diminution of sovereignty in this document?

And secondly, should the loyalist population - the unionist population - vent their anger on the Irish Republic, given that they say they have no target in Northern Ireland against which they can vent that anger, will you make this deal

EAMONN MALLEY (CONTD.)

stick? In other words, will you stand up to the unionist population if they vent their anger in this way?

PRIME MINISTER

The honourable member of the press has not sort of disappointed me! (laughter) Has not disappointed me in the kind of question which he asks.

There is no derogation of sovereignty. That is made clear in the agreement. It is made clear that we will strive to resolve differences, but in the last resort, the decisions and responsibility for administration of affairs north of the border remain with the United Kingdom. Responsibility and decisions south of the border, remain with the Republic. I do hope that the honourable member of the press will take a very constructive view towards this agreement, because honestly and earnestly believe it is in the interests of all of the people who reside in Northern Ireland and I do not want talk of the difficulties. I know there will be those, but I just hope that the overwhelming majority of people who believe in freedom, democracy and justice will combine together to make this agreement work - including honourable members of the press!

JOHN COONEY ("IRISH TIMES")

Can I put three clarifications to you and one possible ambiguity; the three points of clarification:

Firstly, will the secretariat be based in Belfast?

Secondly, will the agreement go to the United Nations and does it then have a treaty status? and,

thirdly, the economic assistance, does this involve an aid package of a Marshall Aid scale from President Reagan?

The point of ambiguity is on page 4 of the communique, at the very bottom, where you say that determined efforts will be made to resolve any differences between the two governments. What happens in a situation where your determined efforts have not resolved the differences? Who resolves the differences in those cases? Does it go to the UN or who?

PRIME MINISTER

Oh no! Look at the agreement!

Can I just answer the first three questions first, and then the fourth one that you put.

First, it is expected that the secretariat will sit in Belfast. It is expected. Of course, we are subject to security advice. It is expected the secretariat will sit in Belfast.

It is expected, because it is normal, that agreements reached between two sovereign powers tend to be registered at the United Nations.

Your third point, should the United States see fit, because it is pleased that we have come to an arrangement, to give economic help, that of course would be very welcome. It is, of course, no part - and never was any part - of the agreement.

With regard to your last point. With respect to you, the agreement is clear. Of course we try the level best we can to resolve differences. That is in the spirit of cooperation of the whole agreement, because we are both anxious to end

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violence. If we are not able to, then each of us is responsible for reaching our own decision on the matter, and that is clear from the agreement. So it is the two who then resolve into their positions and make their own decisions. There is no such thing as an arbitrator. It is an agreement between the two of us and we act in accordance with the terms of the agreement which you have.

DR. FITZGERALD

Could I just add that there may be other countries in Europe or elsewhere which might also wish to show their support and solidarity with what we are seeking to achieve by adding their contribution to any aid that might come from the United States.

NORMAN STOCKTON (ULSTER TELEVISION, BELFAST)

Mrs. Thatcher, having conceded through the conference what the unionists have always resisted - a direct influence for Dublin in the running of this part of the United Kingdom - Enoch Powell will doubtless consider his accusation of treachery made yesterday to have been fulfilled, and so will a great many people in Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER

I hope that they will look at the agreement accurately. The Republic, of course, has always been able to put forward its views. It now has a regular means of doing so. That is with the purpose of trying to bring to an end the violence which we have all suffered in Northern Ireland and in trying to get peace and stability, which will be to the advantage of all people,

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especially including the unionists in Northern Ireland, as well as to the nationalists.

It is quite clear from the agreement that decisions remain north of the border with the Government of the United Kingdom. Decisions south of the border remain with the Republic. So there is no derogation from sovereignty, and I want to say this to the people who have the viewpoint which you indicated:

First, do you not wish to join in trying to end the violence, and second, do you not think that you owe it to the bravery of all those young men and women in the security forces who put their lives at risk in order to defend us? Do you not think you owe it to them positively to help in bringing this agreement to a successful conclusion?

DAVID ROSE (ITN)

You say what the priorities will be for the new conference, but may I ask the Prime Minister in a little more detail to say how she believes it can help to improve security and ask the Taoiseach how he believes it can help to improve and reflect the aspirations of the nationalist minority?

PRIME MINISTER

I believe that it will help security through the very declaration of closer cooperation and we shall transfer it from a declaration into deeds. We shall be in close contact on these matters and we are both resolved to take every step to end violence in Northern Ireland and to make provision for views to be known through democratic means, first by closer cooperation,

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leading to successful devolved government in which both traditions will be represented. Please do not lose sight of that objective: that if this works, the intergovernmental conference and secretariat is in a way an interim to getting acceptable devolved ⁱⁿ government/which the peoples of Northern Ireland will take over the decisions. Until that comes, it is cooperation with ultimate decisions being made by the United Kingdom and the Republic.

DR. FITZGERALD

The conference will reflect the aspirations of the nationalist minority first in the spirit of the agreement. The agreement sets out, in the preamble, the acknowledgement by both governments - British as well as Irish - of the rights of those who aspire to a sovereign united Ireland achieved by peaceful means and through agreement. It recognises and respects the identities of the two communities in Northern Ireland, and involves a commitment to a society free from discrimination and intolerance: the opportunity for both communities to participate fully in the structures and processes of government. That is the basis on which the agreement is built, set out in the preamble.

The structures established, the ones through which the minority community can have the opportunity of identifying with the structures of government, as they have not felt able to do hitherto, and within those structures of government, the Irish Government will be playing a role of putting forward views and proposals with the commitment of the British Government to make every effort to reach agreement - determined efforts to reach

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agreement - on these issues, and through the conference, problems, difficulties, ways in which the identity or rights of the minority community may hitherto not have been given full reflection can be dealt with through a process totally new. At the same time, the aspiration to Irish unit remains, and has indeed been given a degree of recognition not hitherto given by a British Government, including the commitment not merely to support the necessary measures if a majority in favour of a united Ireland emerges, but in fact, a commitment to introduce them in their parliament - something not hitherto included in any declaration or statement by the British Government.

JIM DOUGALL (RTS)

I wonder to what extent the Taoiseach, on one side, on the nationalist side, and the Prime Minister on the other, will be trying to exert influence on the two communities in Northern Ireland to actually participate in devolved government?

DR. FITZGERALD

Yes, the agreement sets out that both our governments support devolved government, on the kind of basis, and the only kind of basis, which the British Government has been willing to contemplate since 1972 - one that would have cross-community support, one that would involve the minority as well as the majority. We not only support it, but we will do anything we can to promote that, and as the Prime Minister has pointed out, it is a very important and relevant part of this agreement that

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brought about and if unionists and nationalists can find means of working together in a process of devolved government, then in those areas the conference will no longer have a role to play. I believe that that is an important and constructive part of the agreement, offering an incentive to the unionist community to move towards devolved government and one which I think is very constructive.

PRIME MINISTER

I cannot offer you a sudden recipe for devolved government. It will not be easy to find. I hope that this agreement will make it less difficult than it has been in the past. Its purpose is to try to bring together and to support all of those people in Northern Ireland who wish to end violence and to proceed in a democratic way. That is its purpose. We really entered this agreement in good faith, earnestly to bring that about. The Taoiseach, as a nationalist and republican, myself as a unionist and a loyalist. If we can enter this agreement in that spirit, I hope that many other people will be able to do so and follow our lead as well.

DAVID PAGE (NBC, UNITED STATES)

Prime Minister, speaking to unionists over the past few days, even before they had seen the agreement, a number have referred to it as a potential sell-out and have raised the spectre of average folks - unionists who never previously took up weapons - of average unionists taking to the streets and producing violence. Could you address that issue and tell us what you would wish the

DAVID PAGE (CONTD.)

average unionist to take out of this agreement and do?

PRIME MINISTER

What I wish the average unionist - and I am a unionist and a loyalist myself - is to accept that we entered into this agreement in good faith to end violence. Violence is totally incompatible with proceeding by political democracy. To end violence, which will be in their interests more than in the interests of anyone else, because they have an assurance in the agreement that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without their consent. And yes, we do call upon moderate people who wish to proceed by democracy everywhere to say violence is no way and just join with us in trying to make this agreement work.

It gives a fresh opportunity and I hope that people will seize it.

DR. FITZGERALD

May I just add to that and remind you of the closing words of what I said at the outset, when I asked nationalists and unionists alike to look at and evaluate this agreement, not as some people in both communities committed to maintaining divisions and hatreds will attempt to portray it, but for what it is. Not for what it has been and speculated to be, but for what it is.

SIÂN O'BOURKE (THE IRISH PRESS, DUBLIN)

Taoiseach, would it be fair to categorise this conference as being something which transcends the confines of Northern

SIAM O'BOURKE (CONTD.)

Ireland but which is aimed at bringing about an internal set of arrangements which will subsequently become more important than the conference itself?

DR. FITZGERALD

It transcends the boundaries of Northern Ireland because it involves both our governments in seeking to resolve the problem in Northern Ireland and bringing peace and stability to Northern Ireland.

SIAM O'BOURKE

But is it aimed at bringing about an internal system of government in the north?

DR. FITZGERALD

It is certainly aimed at - and it would be part of our objective to encourage the development of devolved government in which both sides participate. It also, on the one hand, assures unionists that Irish political unity ^{would} /not be brought about save with the consent of the majority of Northern Ireland. On the other hand, it shows nationalists that if that consent is there, the British Government and our Government, will introduce and support the necessary legislation.

I think it is the case that there have always been Irish nationalists who have felt that Britain had an interest in Northern Ireland that transcended the question of the views and wishes of the people there, and that even if a majority in

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Northern Ireland wished to join a united Ireland, that Britain might have a continuing interest and might wish to hang on to in those circumstances; Northern Ireland/ but the agreement makes it clear that Britain has no such interest.

QUESTION

But is it the hope of the two governments that the conference will become less and less important and that devolved government would come about and that would be the primary form of the administration of Northern Ireland?

DR. FITZGERALD

It is our hope that devolved government will come about. If that happens, then the conference would no longer have a role to play in the areas for which devolved government would be responsible, but it would continue to be concerned with other areas such as security, human rights, questions of identity.

PAT COX (TODAY, TONIGHT, ETC)

Prime Minister, if I can put a question to you on the issue of devolution. You talk about seeking devolution in Northern Ireland on a basis which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community. We recently heard a member of your party, a member of the European Parliament, who helped the Assembly to evolve the devolution report, in that Catherwood Report the unionists suggested that it would be acceptable to them as a formula or a recipe for devolution, but two-thirds support

QUESTION (CONTD.)

democratic basis on which to proceed. Is that an acceptable recipe for you for devolution here and I would like to have a comment also from the Taoiseach as to his government's view of the Catherwood Report and its recipe for devolution.

PRIME MINISTER

No, I cannot give a sudden recipe. The whole nature of this agreement is that we have to reach a conclusion, first by discussion and cooperation - and we would have to work with both communities to get an agreement which is acceptable to them both. We cannot come to a conclusion before the discussions have taken place and indeed, I do not know when discussions will start. But the opportunity is there for both the unionists and for the non-violent nationalists to say: "We now want to work together in a devolved Assembly?" What that recipe would be, I do not know. It would not be in the spirit of the agreement to try to impose one, but to try to reach one by discussion.

DR. FITZGERALD

We will try to help that process and indeed, the agreement provides that our government can make proposals and put forward views with regard to this process of devolution, but as the Prime Minister has said, ultimately the question of securing the participation of representatives of both communities in devolved government has to be one for them.

SIAM DUGGAN (RT NEWS, DUBLIN)

Still on devolution - I address this to Taoiseach and Prime Minister - on page 11 of this agreement, it states that should it prove impossible to achieve devolution, the conference shall be a framework within which the Irish Government may put forward views on proposals for major legislation, major policy issues, which at present are within the purview of the Northern Ireland Departments and which remain the responsibility, at the moment, of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Now, does that imply that should they fail to reach agreement on devolution, Dublin will be given an even greater input into the running of the north?

DR. FITZGERALD

The procedure of the conference is that its responsibilities extend to these areas also until such time as - and we hope it will be soon - agreement is reached on devolved government. Until that time, yes, we will be putting forward views and proposals on questions of policy and legislation in Northern Ireland. If devolved government is agreed, the conference will no longer have that role to play. It will fall back on playing a role in relation to the matters which will continue to be the responsibility of the British Government.

PRIME MINISTER

They can always put forward views. Obviously, there is now a regular arrangement during which views are put forward, and an effort to reach agreement. You will notice that the last

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part of that particular sub-paragraph is in keeping with the rest of the agreement about decisions and that it says: "Within the purview of Northern Ireland Departments and which remain the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland" so it is all in keeping with the tone of the agreement as a whole.

DAVID DAVENPORT (OTE NEWS)

Could I ask the Taoiseach, given that this agreement recognises the legitimacy of the unionist position, how he reconciles that with the constitutional claim to the island of Ireland being the territory of the Republic? And could I ask the Prime Minister how it is intended that the majority of the people of Northern Ireland could be ascertained?

PRIME MINISTER

With a border poll.

DR. FITZGERALD

As far as the first question is concerned, what is there represents the view of the Forum, which recognised the legitimacy of the sense of Britishness and indeed of Protestantism, of the unionist majority in Northern Ireland. It is an echo of the Forum Report, in which all the nationalist parties recognised these rights and aspirations, just as they sought to have recognised the rights and aspirations of the minority nationalist community in Northern Ireland to be part of the greater nationalist community in the island as a whole.

PRIME MINISTER

As you know, there is at present provision in law for a poll to be held from time to time about the views of the people in Northern Ireland. That provision remains, unless we were ever to substitute it by an improved one. At the moment, that provision remains and is expected to remain.

QUESTION

Would the conference take the decision on whether to hold such a poll?

PRIME MINISTER

No, that is a matter for the Government of the United Kingdom, as is every other decision finally, if we cannot reach agreement.

JOHN COLE (BBC)

One question for the Prime Minister on mixed courts, please, and one for the Taoiseach on extradition.

We have had references to mixed courts at these conferences for some years now. When does the Prime Minister expect that they will exist?

What does the Taoiseach think the European Convention.... what implications does it have for extradition and particularly for the problems that has always explained to us about the Irish constitution in that respect?

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PRIME MINISTER

We agreed in good faith to consider the possibility of mixed courts without commitment. We know from past experience the difficulties, and cannot yet see our way around them, but we agreed in good faith to consider this matter among others, as one possibility which may bring greater confidence and faith of all of the people of Northern Ireland in the system of administration of law and justice.

DR. FITZGERALD

On extradition, I said it is the intention of the Irish Government to accede as soon as possible to the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism. There did exist a constitutional impediment to this in the form of the decisions taken by a High Court in a series of extradition cases. Decisions of the Supreme Court in a number of cases have removed the constitutional impediment. What the communique says is that both sides are committed to work for early progress in relations between the security forces and the minority community in Northern Ireland, ways of improving security cooperation between the two governments, and seeking measures which will give substantial expression to the aim that there is public confidence in the administration of justice. It is against this background that the Irish Government has announced its intention to accede as soon as possible to the European Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism.

CANDY YOUNG (WASHINGTON POST)

Clarifying the question as to how the agreement contributes to a lessening of violence, it states:

CANDY YOUNG (CONTD.)

cooperation between the security forces, is it also fair to assume that both parties hope that the agreement will lessen support for paramilitary groups and for those political groups, specifically Sinn Féin, that advocate the use of violence for a change?

DR. FITZGERALD

Yes, a primary purpose of the agreement is to provide means by which the minority community may be enabled to identify with the structures of government in Northern Ireland and to feel themselves to be full first-class citizens of Northern Ireland so that whatever basis there may be - whatever emotional basis there may be - for either support of or tolerance of the IRA will be eroded and in that way peace and stability brought closer.

QUESTION

I would like to ask both Prime Ministers, if they feel the people of Northern Ireland will feel any less British after today and might I ask Dr. FitzGerald in particular if he will be taking any steps to have reflected in the constitution of the Republic the aspiration to Irish unity to which he has referred, rather than the claim to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland which, as is known, is offensive to the unionist population?

PRIME MINISTER

The latter part of your question is a matter for the Taoiseach and the people of the Republic of Ireland, in accordance with the agreement under which decisions south of the border are made by the Republic of Ireland and decisions north of the border

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are made by the United Kingdom.

With regard to the people of Northern Ireland, I hope that they feel that the Taoiseach and I have reached agreement which tries to end violence, which is in their interests above all, and that we have come to an agreement which recognises the legitimacy of the unionist position for the first time in an international agreement, and that it cannot be changed without their consent.

I think if they look at the agreement dispassionately, if that is possible in these matters, that they should take great reassurance from it, and realise that it represents an opportunity for us all to work together to try to bring violence to an end, which would be the greatest prize of all.

DR. FITZGERALD

May I add to that, the agreement, as I said earlier, recognises also on the part of the British as well as Irish Government, the legitimacy of the aspiration to Irish unity in a sovereign Irish state. That is clearly set out there.

On the point about the constitution, there is no proposal to change our constitution and that is not something that arises from this agreement, which is the undertaking within the framework of our existing constitution, but in good faith and looking to the future with the objectives of securing peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

END