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TELEVISION STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

All of us wonder every January what the coming year will bring and this year of course we wonder about the 1980s as a whole. I am not going to attempt any prophecy but, from where I sit, it is quite clear to me that we have a great opportunity here in Northern Ireland.

The 1970s were a time of tragedy for the Province. During the whole decade terrorists sought the destruction of our society - by the only means they know: by murder, by shooting, by bombing, by arson, by physical violence and by intimidation. At one time, some years ago, it almost looked as if they might succeed.

But there is a difference now. We have made a lot of progress. Of course the IRA are not beaten yet. We all know that. But they can be and we all know that too. Now of course evil men will continue to seek opportunities to carry out their evil deeds. But the security forces are much more proficient than they were 10 years ago. The RUC is now twice the size it was then and it is one of the best, most impartial and most disciplined police forces in the world. And it is supported by the best trained and most dedicated soldiers of any army in the world.

But even more important is the attitude of ordinary people. This community has shown beyond any doubt that it is not prepared to give in to those who seek to create anarchy. They have shown that they are sickened by violence and want an end to terrorism and all its evil works.

That is where the hope for the future lies because when people as a

whole decide that they will not permit a small group to go on causing death and destruction then that small group is doomed to fail.

That I sense is what is happening here. The terrorists are becoming more and more isolated both north and south of the border and fewer and fewer people are prepared to help them.

There is nothing surprising about this. Democracy always wins over tyranny; it always has and it always will.

Talking of democracy brings me to another great opportunity. For most of the last decade there has not been enough democracy in Northern Ireland. The Government is determined to find acceptable ways of transferring power to representatives elected by the people of the Province - which I and my other Ministers are not. As you know in a few days time - on Monday next - a conference will begin. I do not think it is going to be easy to reach agreement; the differences between the parties are wide but I am encouraged by two things. Those who are coming to the conference are coming with a genuine will to find a way forward and, secondly, they know as I know that everyone wants the democratic control of Northern Ireland matters by Northern Ireland representatives. They want a system that will last.

Furthermore we have all seen two systems that have broken down and we do not want that again. We are all looking for the same thing - for ourselves, for our children and, for that matter, our grandchildren - a lasting way of governing our affairs fairly, effectively and without prejudice. Then we can all live our lives without fear.

On the economic front also I believe we are now on the right path. Creating the conditions for sound economic growth is not a painless process and the Government has deliberately chosen policies to promote permanent improvement rather than short-term measures. This has meant some curtailment of public expenditure and I have sought to ensure that it is being done in such a way as to have the least effect on employment here. The Government intends to press on vigorously with its campaign for new jobs for Northern Ireland in the 1980s.

The Government can and will do a lot but it will be for industry here - both employers and trade unions - to seize the opportunities for expansion and development to produce the practical results which alone can improve our standard of living.

In all these matters there are no instant solutions. What I do offer is the will and determination to end the vicious campaign of the IRA. Their only declared political objective is to bring down the Government of Southern Ireland as well as ours here. All these people have to offer is an island united in subjection to terrorism.

Our way forward is by the exercise of the political process. That can bring about a better and more understanding society in the Province. I am determined to do everything I possibly can to help in that task and everyone has a part to play.

Together I am certain we can make the 1980s better than the 1970s.