



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Northern Ireland

1 Draft speech made
to meet with
British Government
on 2/4/89

3.4 sd. M. G. 3/5

1. Northern Ireland is the major political problem we face in this country. The unity of the Irish people is a fundamental aim of national policy and, until this is achieved, I believe the full potential of our people will never be realized. Inevitably, the Northern problem complicates and, on occasion, makes our relations with Britain very difficult - I doubt indeed if the relationship between the two countries will ever be fully normal until the problem is resolved.

2. I particularly welcome the emphasis which your spokesperson has been placing on the need for political progress. I myself have recently been trying to introduce a new dynamic to this process by offering talks to the Unionist leadership without any preconditions whatsoever, and without prejudice to their position. This offer has not been taken up to date but it is still on the table and I remain hopeful that it may in due course evoke a response.

3. I also welcome the fact that your spokesperson strongly condemned violence in Northern Ireland. We ourselves have long renounced violence as a means of achieving progress there. It is futile, wasteful and counterproductive.

4. Through the Anglo-Irish Agreement, we are achieving some progress and reform in Northern Ireland, though much more remains to be done. However, our position is that the problem cannot ultimately be resolved exclusively in a Northern framework. I believe that any reasonable and objective observer would accept that a lasting solution will only be achieved in the context of the relationships on this island as a whole, and of the relationship between Britain and Ireland - what I have called in the past the totality of relationships on these islands. I would very much welcome the understanding of friendly countries for my Government's efforts to achieve political progress along these lines.