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(d) Unionist reactions

# Unionists join for anti-Forum propaganda

THE Official Unionists and the DUP announced yesterday that they were sending representatives to Britain, the United States and Europe to put forward Unionist opposition to the proposals contained in the report of the New Ireland Forum.

DUP deputy leader Mr Peter Robinson and Mid-Ulster MP Rev. William McCrea left Belfast yesterday morning to bring copies of the party's response to the Forum, entitled: "The Unionist Case — the Forum Report Answered" to Congressmen, Senators and State Department officials in Washington.

DUP chief whip, Mr Jim Allister, said in Belfast yesterday that it was "absolutely vital that Unionists realise there is now going to be launched an international campaign by Republicanism to try and force Irish unity down the throats of Ulster Unionists." He said part of the Unionist counter-offensive would involve a propaganda campaign in every place where Forum politicians went with their proposals, starting with the Foreign Minister, Mr Barry, in the United States.

The DUP also issued their document at Westminster yesterday afternoon and party leader Rev. Ian Paisley will launch it in Strasbourg next week.

Meanwhile, Official Unionist leader Mr Jim Molyneux was meeting the Northern Ireland Secretary Mr Prior in London yesterday afternoon. According to party secretary Mr Frank Millar at a Belfast press conference yesterday morning Mr Molyneux would be arguing that now the Forum report was out of the way, the way was clear for discussion of the Official Unionist blueprint for administrative devolution, published last week.

Also in London yesterday were Orange Order leader Rev. Martin Smyth, MP, and North Down Assemblyman Mr Robert McCarthy, QC, who were addressing the Conservative Party's Northern Ireland backbench committee of the Forum report and the Official Unionists' devolution proposals.

Next Tuesday Mr Millar and the chairwoman of the OUP party Executive Mrs Hazel Bradford will also fly to the United States. Mr Millar said they would be

telling American politicians — including the 'Friends of Ireland' group, and the media, that the Official Unionists devolution proposals addressed, in a way the Forum report did not, "the complexity and difficulties of the Northern Ireland situation and the question of what is possible and what is not possible within Northern Ireland."

He said the Official Unionists plan, with its proposals for a Bill of Rights and recognition of Irish cultural activities, showed "a degree of flexibility and generosity" and that eventually the SDLP would have to recognise they would "have to come back and seek an accommodation and an arrangement within Northern Ireland."



Mrs Hazel Bradford

# THE IRISH TIMES

FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1984

## Forum a failure, says paper

From Jim Cusack  
in Belfast

THE TWO unionist daily newspapers in Northern Ireland yesterday described the Forum report in their editorials as a "failure" and "pie in the sky." The nationalist morning daily, the *Irish News* praised the report and agreed with the interpretation that the report represented an agenda for further inter-governmental talks.

The largest of the three dailies, the *Belfast Telegraph* carried the heading "Forum failure" on its front page editorial column. The "unreality" of the "green-tinted vision of the future," it said, was that it had said its aims were to achieve development by consent from unionists where this clearly did not exist.

The "unitary state" option was described as a cul-de-sac and it maintained that such a state without British financial aid would have "third world status."

It adds: "The grand designs have been tried and have proved incapable of achieving more than a patched-up consensus in the South, let alone the North. It will be difficult for Northern nationalists to retreat and accept that the primary job is to change the political climate in the North, rather than rely on British or the Southern Irish to do it for them. The alternative, as they must know, is a long, long period in the political wilderness, which would be an abdication of their responsibility for their electorate. Think again, Mr Hume, in the light of what must be admitted is the Forum's failure."

The *Telegraph* also carried a front page vox pop in which it quotes the views of six people in Belfast and one in Derry about their reaction to the Forum beneath the heading "Ulster poll reveals apathy to proposals."

The *Newsletter* is also scathing in its front page leader. The Unionist people, it says, "will not tolerate for one moment any proposal which is perceived as being designed, by either fair means or foul, to take them down a road they find utterly repugnant."

It adds: "It will provide Dr FitzGerlad, who has been projected by his officials in the capitals of Europe and in Washington as the personification of sweet reasonableness, with the excuse for another international ego trip. But he will be going to London on a mission impossible to meet Mrs Thatcher."

The *Irish News* leader appeared to hold the view that the constitutional guarantee to the unionists should not be allowed to hold up political development along one or other of the Forum's suggested lines, indefinitely.

"The British Government can emphasise to the unionists the historic opportunity that this statement of commitment provides, without any pre-condition attached. Without unionist co-operation, the two Governments can ultimately proceed quite legitimately in their absence," it states.

It described the Forum report as an "agenda for action" and said it was a "triumph in Ireland for the true longing for brotherhood and sisterhood that we are the basis of human civilised democracy." It added: "The ardent prayer and wish of every citizen in these islands will be that the Taoiseach's appeal will be heeded..."

The New Ireland Forum committee paid for advertisements in each of the newspapers carrying the Forum report in full. The document is reprinted across two pages in the *Irish News* and *Newsletter* and in one page in the *Belfast Telegraph*.

(e) Irish newspaper editorial coverage

# SCEALA ÉIREANN

Ó DÚM GÉINE ÓB AGUS ODRÁ NA DÉIREANN

Déardaoin, Bealtaine 3, 1984

Today:  
Sts. Philip and James

Tomorrow:  
Beatified Martyrs

## HISTORIC REPORT

**T**HERE was something high-minded about the deliberations of the Forum. It was exhaustive in the welter of written submissions it took, in the economic analysis it provided and in the warning that shines out through every page of the document that the North could slide into a chasm of violence and economic stagnation if something is not done, and done quickly, by the party with the prime power and responsibility for the area — the British government.

The Forum will be seen as a mark on the seawall of history at which the constitutional nationalist tide swept up to a higher point than had hitherto been achieved since the present Northern troubles began.

It was a pity, therefore, that the Report has produced something of an Irish stew-type of reaction in the short term.

In Dublin, the initial reaction after Mr. Haughey's press conference was that he had gone for an emphasis of his own on the Report, as though he was displeased with the federal and joint sovereignty proposals. Ironically, in Belfast, the Unionists, in rejecting the Report, argued that it was too much a "Haughey document".

Later in the evening, the significance of the British government's speedy reply began to sink in. And the Forum leaders themselves, still later in the day, were at pains to emphasise that the document was the document, that everyone had signed it and that it spoke for itself.

The central point is that it will be for the Government to act on the Forum's Report. Normal politics are now resumed.

The Forum has done its work and it is for the Government of the Republic to make the best formulation it can on the basis of that work to the other sovereign government involved, that in London.

The main emphasis in the Forum's Report is, unquestionably, on the options of a unitary state. It said:

"The particular structure of political unity which the Forum will wish to see established is a unitary state, achieved by agreement and consent, embracing the whole island of Ireland and providing guarantees for the protection and preservation of the Unionist and Nationalist identities."

The Report subsequently went into the options of a federal/confederal state and of joint authority in some depth, but it is fairly clear which of the three options carried most favour. However, at this stage, obviously, nothing is ruled out.

As has been said before, the Forum was in effect a case where the Irish would propose and the British could dispose, and this still remains to be the case. It would be a pity if an impression that the parties to the Forum were not united could be viewed in London as a reason for disposing other than in a productive and positive fashion of the Forum's Report.

In fact, despite some critical notes, there were rather reassuring nuances in the London statement that this may not be the case, but we shall see.

Let it be said, in conclusion, as we said at the outset, that there was something high-minded about the Forum's deliberations. The chairman, Dr. Colm O hEocha, deserves some credit for this, as do the four party leaders. And the Forum, apart from whatever may come of it eventually, will always be remembered for having brought the bishops to testify before it.

Let us hope that all the hopes and the efforts that went into it will yield something positive. The work was good and deserves to be seen as such.

# THE IRISH TIMES

13 D'OLIER STREET, DUBLIN 2  
THURSDAY, MAY 3, 1984

## A FAIR CONTRIBUTION

The dead of Ulster deserve a better hearing than they are likely to get, even after the publication of the New Ireland Forum report.

Who, indeed, remembers them? Who remembers the Reverend Parker and his dead son? Who remembers Senator Paddy Wilson or the victims of the La Mon fire, or of McGurk's bar or any of the sudden or ritual slaughterings of the last fourteen years? All the dark and bloody days are soon forgotten — except by the families of the dead and the maimed.

And who will be left to mourn some of the people reading this very report, who will be dead in perhaps a few days or a few weeks? That is what the Forum is about in the first instance. To strive to put an end to the feuding and the hatred and the resort to arms, when what is needed is dialogue and understanding of each other, and perhaps, in the end, a real coming together.

It has been said plainly enough in the report and decently enough and with some generosity and — more — with a measure of humility.

\* \* \*

The Taoiseach went to some lengths yesterday to stress that this was not a plan, it was an agenda, and a necessarily incomplete agenda by its very nature. For it was the voice, only, of Nationalist Ireland hoping for a response from Britain and from Unionist Ireland. It would be well not to be too modest about it, for Nationalist Ireland comprises something like three-quarters of the people on the island.

For the first time, that Ireland has put its mind to the problem and perhaps for the first time has studied the Unionist dilemma thoroughly rather than arguing with it. It has even shown some understanding of the Unionist stance and has striven to see how it could be accommodated with the views of the rest of the people in the country.

For the first time, too, this is an Irish initiative and one which has been worked on for almost a year with complete devotion by the pick of the four mainstream Nationalist parties. It deserves serious consideration, though the first response of Mr Prior is hardly encouraging.

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

No one believes that Ireland stands very high on the British list of priorities, but this document forecasts, soberly, convincingly, the possibly speedy decline of the North into complete anarchy if constitutional politics fails soon to bring peace. "Every act of murder and violence," says the report, "makes a just solution more difficult to achieve. The greatest threat to the paramilitary organisations would be determined constitutional action to reach and sustain a just and equitable solution and thus to break the vicious circle of the violence and repression."

Yet, the report says, crisis management is all that Britain seems capable of. More is needed.

The Forum has not taken up an aggressive attitude. It sets out several forms that a new Irish State might take, and it has been at pains to stress that the Ireland that is foreseen needs must have a radically new persona to accommodate those Northern people who are not of the Nationalist tradition.

There is more positive thinking in this document about the future relationship of Orange and Green than has been seen before. No one living in Ireland should feel less at home than another or less protected by law than his or her fellow citizen. And the sense of Britishness of the Northern Protestants is part of that.

\* \* \*

The Taoiseach said yesterday that the members of the Forum had lifted their eyes to new horizons. This is how the report puts it: "Society in Ireland as a whole comprises a wider diversity of cultural and political traditions than exists in the South, and the constitution and laws of a new Ireland must accommodate these social and political realities." In a unified Ireland "there would have to be a general and explicit acknowledgment of a broader and more comprehensive Irish identity than is visible today."

To some, this and other parts of the report may appear starry-eyed. But this line of thought is not new. Thomas Davis had it. Its general tendency is part of the separatist canon, though perhaps neglected or forgotten in the last decades.

But the main message of the Forum report is hope. Even with Mr Haughey's spanner thrown in the works yesterday, the Nationalist mind has presented a great deal of food for thought which the British Government cannot afford to overlook. Unionists reading it — if many do — will find a commendable earnestness which is not always shown by politicians.

This then is the contribution of Irish Nationalists towards the ending of the hatred and the killing and the waste and the sheer devilry of what is going on in the North. It is a submission made without pretentiousness and in all sincerity. Can Unionists match it? Or the British?

The nation

## A document of hope and understanding

THE first thing to be said about the long-awaited report of the New Ireland Forum is that the type of consensus which has been reached must come as a relief to everyone who had feared, only a short time ago, that such agreement might not have been possible. Not only has this been achieved, but the document presented yesterday is a very powerful one, offering not only a firm recommendation, but several equally cogent alternatives, all of which, of course, must be given the most intense consideration. Bluntly, what has happened here is that, insofar as the Nationalist community is concerned, the rancours of history have been set aside in the interest of the whole island. For the first time since the foundation of the State, all the parties have come together to try to find a common solution to the most pressing problem of this century. What must now be asked is whether the Unionist community, for their part, can display such open-mindedness, such willingness to change, such readiness to look forward rather than back, so that reconciliation may be achieved.

Britain too, must recognise that she can no longer allow the Northern agony to continue without making the most intense efforts to bring it to an end. Bearing in mind the dismal failure of earlier initiatives, there may be an understandable reluctance in London to move too quickly. There may well be an inbuilt caution inspired by the thought that for too long the North has been seen as the graveyard of British politicians. But against this, there must also be open recognition of the fact that this initiative is both historic and unique; that the members of the Forum have made the most sustained and intensive effort to arrive not only at consensus about what should be done, but have adduced the sort of recommendations on which a final solution can be based, no matter what final option is chosen. In short, the vast majority of the people on this island, through their democratically chosen representatives, have now given their agreed opinion, and Britain cannot opt out.

The recommendations which have been presented do not in any sense comprise a patchwork solution; rather are they designed to create a framework for a genuinely new Ireland, a new society free from fear and bigotry, free from mutual suspicion and mistrust. They represent, of course, what Dr. FitzGerald frankly described as a Nationalist analysis. In the circumstances of Irish history and Irish reality, they could scarcely be otherwise. But having said this, they also represent, in the most unambiguous terms, a total recognition of the traditions, fears and difficulties of the Unionist community. People reading this report may well quibble about some of its contents; they may well point to the enormous problems to be overcome. But nobody reading it can truthfully

say that it is not a document of total honesty, of total commitment, of total dedication to the ideal of a peaceful solution to the grievous problem besetting this island.

What the Nationalist community is now saying to Ireland and to the world at large is that they, as a cohesive body, are ready to communicate with those of the other tradition which must and will be respected. There will, of course, be detractors; we have seen and heard some of them already, those people who are unwilling to accept any vestige of change which does not restore to them total domination of one section of the community by another. There will be those who will see in it a distinct threat to their own campaigns of violence and bloodshed, campaigns which have been proven absolutely futile over and over again. But there will also be those who will see in it the only alternative to the sort of chaos that has been wreaking havoc with life on both sides of the Border. Since this is above all, a document of hope, we can but hope that it will provide the necessary inspiration to all to realise that there must be change, that things simply cannot be permitted to continue as they are.

Ultimately, it all comes back to the people who can do most to ensure that the ideals and inspiration of this report are translated into action - the British Government. If they fail to be swayed, if they fail to move, if they fail to encourage progress, then not only will constitutional politics have taken a hammering, but the way will be open to the men with the bombs and the bullets and the greasy path to total anarchy will be even more slippery. It would be foolish to pretend that there are no problems. Even in terms of simple economics, the implementation of any of the suggested alternatives would, for instance, pose the gravest difficulties for the Republic, especially in this time of serious recession. But the point is that the problems have not been pushed aside; they are recorded for all to see. They can and must be tackled.

In the last analysis, the judgment on this historic document must be that it is honest, generous and realistic. Everywhere it encourages reconciliation, nowhere does it advocate even the remotest form of compulsion. Of its very nature, it demands from people on all sides of the divide the sort of generosity of heart and mind which the report itself epitomises. Without this, there can be no progress; with it, the possibilities are limitless. We can but hope and urge that everybody will read this report for themselves and form their own judgments, rather than allow themselves to be influenced by people who would wish to misrepresent it for their own ends. We are on the edge of a new era offering new and even exciting opportunities. These cannot be grasped if people choose the worst option of all - to do nothing.



## Agenda for action

**T**HE extensive news coverage provided in our paper today is evidence of the degree of importance we believe our readers will attach to the publication of the New Ireland Forum report.

It is the culmination and the beginning of the most significant political development that has happened in this island in the last 60 years. For the first time democratic nationalists in Ireland have examined in depth the whole range of issues in the conflict and violence now undermining the stability of society in the island as a whole.

In particular, they have identified for themselves how they would wish to see the realities of the two States in Ireland reconciled as between themselves and as between the two sovereign governments.

In the early stages of the Forum, critics commented cynically that it was an exercise to save the SDLP. As its work progressed and its interim reports of submissions were published the critics were confounded.

Yesterday was a triumph in Ireland for the true longing for brotherhood and sisterhood that are the basis of human civilised democracy. Pitting it was and a well-merited reward for the participants that the publication was unveiled before such a global attendance of the world media.

Many disappointing and superficial responses have already been made by politicians in Northern Ireland. It is too early to predict what their considered reactions will be.

The preliminary comments of the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, James Prior, were guarded and in certain respects curiously premature. At the same time he welcomed the document and in particular its emphasis on the need for consent to constitutional change.

The really critical test for gauging whether this significant opportunity for progress is grasped will only emerge in the near future when the considered view of the British Prime Minister and her cabinet is revealed, if only partially, as prudence may require.

There are encouraging signs of a real desire on the part of the British government to continue and to increase the momentum of the London/Dublin axis. The report provides ample scope for progress in this area without in any way exposing either government to a substantive accusation of coercion. In this respect, one would look particularly at a most significant statement in the report. Under the heading: "Need for Accommodation of Both Identities in a New Approach," it states (4.15): "The solution to both the historic problem and the current crisis of Northern Ireland and the continuing problem of relations between Ireland and Britain necessarily requires new structures that will accommodate together two sets of legitimate rights:

- the right of nationalists to effective political, symbolic and administrative expression of their identity; and the
- right of unionists to effective political, symbolic and administrative expression of their identity, their ethos and their way of life.

*So long as the legitimate rights of both unionists and nationalists are not accommodated together in new political structures acceptable to both, that situation will continue to give rise to conflict and instability. The starting point of genuine reconciliation and dialogue is mutual recognition and acceptance of the legitimate rights of both. The Forum is convinced that a dialogue which fully respects both traditions can overcome the fears and divisions of the past and create an atmosphere in which peace and stability can be achieved."*

The British government can emphasise to the emphasis the historic opportunity that this statement of commitment provides, without any pre-conditions attached. Without unionist cooperation, the two governments can ultimately proceed quite legitimately in their absence.

The Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald emphasised yesterday that the report was not a blueprint but an agenda for action.

"There are" he suggested "three elements to the process started today. The first must be an immense effort of reflection and education about this problem within the nationalist tradition, continuing what has now been begun. The second should be a similar effort on the part of the other protagonists to the problem of Northern Ireland. This we must encourage in the days ahead. The third has to be action, this too we must work for, carefully, patiently and tirelessly."

The ardent prayer and wish of every citizen in these islands will be that the Taoiseach's appeal will be heeded and that no-one will feel excused from the obligation to reflect, to debate and to act.

2. REACTION IN BRITAIN

- (a) Official comment
- (b) British media coverage
  - (i) Analyses of British press coverage
  - (ii) British media coverage
- (c) The Irish editorial perspective on the British response and role

(a) Official Comment

# THE IRISH TIMES

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FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1984

No. 39,003

SPECIAL

## Prior gives brief report

From David McKiltrick,  
London Editor

THE British Cabinet yesterday had a short preliminary discussion on the report of the New Ireland Forum at its normal Thursday morning meeting, according to reliable sources in Whitehall.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr Prior, gave the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, and other Cabinet members a brief rundown of the contents of the report and his general approach to it.

His intention is understood to be to consider the report in detail over the next week or so and to make a detailed response to it later this month. Later, he envisages opening talks with the Irish Government on some aspects of the report.

It is believed that there was no substantive discussion of the report at yesterday's Cabinet meeting. Mr Prior had not written any briefing papers for his Cabinet colleagues before its publication, and it seems likely now that he will present them with his considered analysis of the report, and his plans on how to react to it, in some weeks' time.

The Government has already decided to make time for a full debate on the report, and this is tentatively scheduled to take place after the European elections in mid-June. The Labour leader, Mr Neil Kinnock, yesterday pressed the Leader of the House, Mr John Biffen, to make Government time available for a debate. Mr Biffen replied that he would of course give the matter consideration.

One interesting piece of information is that Mr Kinnock had decided to put down a motion declaring his party's commitment to Irish unity by consent, and to impose a three-line whip, thus requiring all Labour MPs to vote for it. He has, however, been persuaded by leaders of the Forum parties not to do this. They believed that doing this might force the Conservatives into voting against, and thereby turn the issue into a party dispute.

The Liberal leader, Mr David Steel, is to visit Belfast later this month and may go on to Dublin. He can be expected to give his response to the Forum at that stage.

The Prime Minister yesterday passed up an opportunity to refer to the Forum in the Commons. Unionist MP Mr James Kilfedder, who is Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, asked her at PM's Question Time to deal with the Forum's allegations that Britain was responsible for a political vacuum in Northern Ireland, and urge the SDLP to take their seats.

Mrs Thatcher merely replied that those who were elected to the Assembly could freely express their views there as they were elected to do.

# Irish role recognised by Thatcher

From AIDAN HENNIGAN in LONDON

THE British Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, in her first public statement on the report of the New Ireland Forum yesterday, promised "a pretty rigorous, intellectual inspection" of the document but, at the same time, rejected some of its proposals as "simplistic" and likely to have "enormous repercussions for the people of Northern Ireland."

Interviewed on the BBC radio programme *The World This Weekend*, she insisted, however, that Britain was "constantly, desperately, trying to find a solution", and conceded that a solution could not be achieved by Britain alone. "There is an Irish aspect to this," she declared.

Mrs. Thatcher, during the interview, re-emphasised the determination of her government to stand by the constitutional guarantee for Northern Ireland, and recalled the Northern Secretary, Mr. Jim Prior's earlier criticism about the report, especially "its historic dimension".

The interview was on a day when reports were circulating in London that Mr. Prior was about to make another direct bid to get all constitutionally elected parties back into the Northern Ireland Assembly, and to push, presumably, for more devolved government. Mrs. Thatcher, when questioned on these reports, appeared to favour the idea.

She said that if the nationalist parties wanted to attend there was an "open and ready forum for them." Commenting



● Mrs. Thatcher . . . seeking a solution.

She then added that Britain was bound by the provisions of the British guarantee to the people of Northern Ireland that they would remain British unless "they consent to having a different arrangement".

"Naturally I have been worried about trying to get an improvement in the security situation, and getting a more peaceful political system in Northern Ireland," she declared.

we will go on trying."

Mrs. Thatcher then spoke of the killings in Northern Ireland, and said the situation could not go on for ever. They had to come to some arrangement that would suit people. She added: "You can't do it by being English or British alone. There is an Irish aspect to this."

When she was asked about the alternatives put forward by the Forum, she recalled what Mr. Prior had said in his statement, namely, that in many cases some parts of that Forum report were totally unacceptable, particularly the historic dimension.

"Equally, he welcomed certain things, and so do I, a total condemnation of violence."

She also recalled that Mr. Prior had said that the solution of all the nationalist parties who took part in that Forum was simplistic, and would have enormous repercussions for people in Northern Ireland, as Britain was bound by the guarantee for Northern Ireland.

"Of course, we always have to look at any new ideas and give them a pretty rigorous intellectual inspection because one is constantly, desperately trying to find a solution to these problems to try to stop the violence on the security forces in Northern Ireland and on the people of Northern

# Thatcher accepts need for new move on North

By David McKittrick, London Editor

THE BRITISH Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, yesterday delivered a mixed verdict on the report of the New Ireland Forum, describing its recommendations as "really rather simplistic" while at the same time declaring herself ready to look at any new idea.

She rejected some parts of the report, particularly its historical section, as "totally unacceptable" but added that she accepted and welcomed other aspects, in particular its condemnation of violence.

Referring to the continuing violence in Northern Ireland the Prime Minister declared: "This can't go on forever," and added: "We must find something."

In sum, her response, which was given in a BBC radio interview yesterday, was similar to that of her Northern Ireland secretary, Mr Prior. Although she said twice that Britain was bound by its guarantee to Unionists, the Forum parties may take some heart in her view that something must be done, and in her professed willingness to explore fresh fields.

Mrs Thatcher's remarks came as the Irish Government maintained its effort to promote the Forum report in Britain. The Taoiseach, Dr FitzGerald, gave a major interview on RTV's "Week-end World" programme, while the Irish Ambassador to Britain, Mr Noel Dorr, took part in a popular commercial radio show in London.

Official sources yesterday described as "a bit over the top" one British newspaper report that Mr Prior plans to launch a political initiative, possible with three components — a new power-sharing devolved government, joint authority by London and Dublin over some areas such as security, and a joint Anglo-Irish parliamentary council.

Another report, that Mr Prior is

begin to cut the links between Ulster and Britain" is presumably even further over the top.

What Mrs Thatcher's words yesterday seem to signify is that, like her Northern Ireland Secretary, she accepts the Forum report's key point that a new move of some kind is needed to tackle the North's problems. The way now appears to be open for inter-governmental talks, to begin probably after the mid-June European elections.

Mr Prior already accepts that British policy should be steered in the general direction of closer co-operation with the Republic, though he seems unwilling to contemplate anywhere as far as the Forum parties would wish to see.

In her radio interview, Mrs Thatcher said Britain was "absolutely bound" by its guarantee to the people of Northern Ireland that they should remain British unless they consented to having a different arrangement.

"Naturally, I've been worried about trying to get improvements in the security position and indeed getting a more peaceful political system in Northern Ireland. Ever since one came into office one has tried to fashion initiatives which would be acceptable to both sides of the community.

"So far we haven't been successful. Of course, we'll go on trying because you look at this situation, you look at the numbers of people in your security forces who have given their lives for this, you look at the number of deaths in Northern Ireland, you look at the terrorists and you think, this can't go on for ever, therefore we must find something," the Prime Minister said.

She added: "Of course, looking at that situation, any Government

(Continued on page 6)

is going to try to go on and come to some arrangement which will suit people. But you can't do it just being English or British alone. There is an Irish aspect to this."

Referring to Mr Prior, Mrs Thatcher continued: "He went on to say that their solutions are really rather simplistic and, of course, would have enormous repercussions for people in Northern Ireland, and we are bound by the guarantee to the people of Northern Ireland.

"Of course, we all have to look at any new idea, as I said a long time ago in the House (of Commons), and give them a pretty rigorous intellectual inspection — because one is constantly, desperately, trying to find a solution to these problems, to try to stop the violence, to try to stop the effects on the police, on the prison officers, on the security forces, on the people of Northern Ireland on both sides of the community. But we've got to have some help from all of the people in Northern Ireland. We've got to."

Mr Prior and his aides in the Northern Ireland Office are currently analysing the Forum report, and he expects to make a detailed response, perhaps in a week from now or perhaps longer. He has yet to present his Cabinet colleagues with a detailed evaluation of the report.

The Taoiseach, in his "Weekend World" interview, stressed that the Government was open to suggestions for progress in ways other than those contained in the Forum report.

Dr FitzGerald said the situation in the North was deteriorating all the time, and if this continued there were grave dangers for the survival of any kind of society in Northern Ireland, as well as the danger that the problem could spread into the Republic and to Britain.

Dr FitzGerald was questioned extensively by his interviewer, Brian Walden, on the idea of joint authority. He said: "The question of joint authority and joint sovereignty are different. Obviously, you could have a joint sovereignty situation in which, literally, the sovereignty was shared equally. It would certainly be unusual, almost unprecedented in international terms, but you could have that."

The Taoiseach said one way in which joint authority could be exercised could be, with Britain retaining its sovereignty. "Alternatively, you could have joint authority exercised with sovereignty vested in the United Kingdom at the present time — or in a future Irish State, if there were consent to a change of sovereignty on the part of the people of Northern Ireland."

Discussing the details of joint authority, which he described as a completely speculative area, Dr FitzGerald said that perhaps the most difficult problem of all in relation to such an arrangement was that of who should resolve disputes and have the final say. "I don't have an answer to that —



# Thatcher accepts 'an Irish aspect'

From NICHOLAS LEONARD  
in London

IN HER first public comment on the New Ireland Forum the British prime Minister Mrs. Thatcher made it plain yesterday that she accepts the importance of "an Irish aspect" in solving the problems of Northern Ireland.

It was clear, however, that she is not yet willing to reveal her own opinion on what is the best route forward.

And she stressed on BBC Radio's World This Weekend that the British government was bound by the guarantees to the people of Northern Ireland and they remain British unless they consent to a different arrangement.

The prestigious ITV programme, Weekend World, said yesterday that it has been reliably informed that the British Cabinet is sympathetic to the idea of joint authority over the North.

The political editor of the Observer reported that Mr. Prior, the Northern Ireland minister, is "determined to use the Forum report to launch a major new political initiative in the province". He would be "putting both his reputation and his political career on the line."

Mrs. Thatcher was asked about this report on BBC radio yesterday.

She avoided answering the question directly but pointed out that Mr. Prior had been



Mrs. Margaret Thatcher

responsible for creating the Northern Ireland Assembly, which is "an open and ready Forum" for the nationalists if they wish to attend it.

She reiterated the guarantee to the majority in the North that "they remain British unless they consent to having a different arrangement."

## "SIMPLISTIC"

She said that when she considers the members of the security forces who have given their lives and the number of deaths and the terrorism, she thinks "this cannot go on forever. Therefore we must find something."

"Of course, looking at the situation, any government is going to go on trying to come to some arrangement which will suit people. You can't do it by being English

or British alone. There is an Irish aspect to this."

Asked about the Forum report, Mrs. Thatcher replied: "You heard what Jim Prior said in a statement, that in many cases, some parts of that Forum report were totally unacceptable, particularly its historic dimensions. Equally he welcomed certain things and so do I — a total condemnation of violence."

"Mr. Prior said the solutions of all the nationalist parties who took part in that Forum were simplistic and would have enormous repercussions for people in Northern Ireland and we are bound by the guarantee for the North."

"Of course we always have to look at any new ideas, give them a pretty rigorous intellectual inspection, because one is constantly, desperately, trying to find a solution to these problems — to try to stop the violence, to try to stop the effects, on the police, on the prison officers, on the security forces and on the people of Northern Ireland on both sides of the community."

"But we have got to have some help from all of the people in Northern Ireland. We have got to."

The idea of joint authority was endorsed by the Sunday Times yesterday: "Sovereignty over the North is not for sale but joint authority could be very helpful if it meant real co-operation in matters of security."



IRISH PRESS

7 MAY 1984

# Cabinet welcomes British response

By IRISH PRESS Political Correspondent,  
SEAN O'ROURKE

GOVERNMENT sources last night welcomed the assertion by the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, that there is "an Irish aspect" to finding a solution in Northern Ireland, as well as her confession that you can't do it by just being English or British alone."

Mrs. Thatcher's comments, in a BBC interview, were interpreted in Dublin as being in line with an important admission in Britain's first reaction to the Forum report of the need to face up to the feelings of alienation among Northern nationalists.

Meanwhile, the Taoiseach, Dr. FitzGerald,

yesterday ruled out a special summit meeting with Mrs. Thatcher in the near future to discuss the forum report, and stressed, instead, the merits of establishing common ground through "less dramatic channels".

The earliest discussions between the two leaders on the report are likely to be at an informal meeting during the next summit in Paris at the end of June.

An Anglo-Irish summit will not be held until the autumn and will be preceded by intensive work at diplomatic level, as well as discussions between the Northern Secretary, Mr. Prior, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Barry.

(b) Media Coverage

(i) Analyses of British press coverage

(ii) Editorial comment

# Forum ushers in reality, says British press

By David McKittrick, London Editor

THE NEW Ireland Forum report received extensive coverage in the serious British newspaper and some of the "pop" papers yesterday, attracting a surprising amount of favourable comment.

Although almost all papers were critical of at least some aspects of the report, practically every one accepted its central argument that the situation in the North was desperate and could become even more dangerous unless a major initiative is taken.

In their news coverage the papers tended to give prominence to the critical reaction of the Northern Ireland Secretary, whose response was variously described as a rebuff, a snub and near hostility, and also to the perceived split between Fianna Fail and the other Forum parties.

But one of the most notable features was the sheer volume of space devoted to the report: *The Times* and *Guardian* both carried it as their main story, with the former also giving it almost a half-page inside the paper and the latter devoting a full page to its contents.

*The Daily Telegraph* ran the story on the front page and gave it half a page inside, while the *Financial Times* coverage was also considerable.

One particularly striking article could be

found in the right-wing *Daily Express*, whose featured columnist, George Gale, wrote: "It is Mrs Thatcher's duty — since it directly involves the governing of part of the United Kingdom, it could be said to be her paramount duty to address herself with all the considerable vigour of her mind and will to Ulster's condition and to its future state."

Mr Gale said that the rise of Sinn Fein meant that Mrs Thatcher could not neglect Ireland. He added: "the Protestants of the North, who could have joined the Forum but declined, will do their utmost and damndest to denounce the report."

"The most vehement unionists within the Tory Party, conveniently forgetting that Tory unionism is Scottish, not Irish, will shout about the integrity of the United Kingdom. Mr Enoch Powell, who wants fully to integrate Ulster — an essentially foreign body politic — into the British political body, will scathingly indict it."

"I beg Mrs Thatcher not to heed this clamour. I beg her instead to read, mark and learn from the report. I beg her to concentrate her mind and energies upon her Irish problem."

Mr Gale concluded that the federal option was the only one likely to survive — a unitary State was a recipe for civil war, and joint sovereignty would turn out to be a "dog's dinner."

The most pro-Forum editorial of all came in *The Financial Times*. It said the report "deserves and unqualified welcome from all those who want a peaceful solution to the Irish question."

Describing it as a major departure from the nationalist thinking of the past, the paper said Irish unity, though still the goal, had become a distant aspiration rather than an immediate political aim — "reality has taken over."

The editorial said it was essential that there should be a positive British response, and concluded: "No British policy will get anywhere if it is half-hearted and low on the political agenda. Mrs Thatcher has an opportunity denied to almost all her predecessors. She should make an Irish settlement a priority for the next four years."

*The Daily Telegraph*, on the other hand, described a unitary State or federal arrangement as "wholly unacceptable," but then, in a major surprise, did not rule out the joint authority idea.

It concluded: "If joint authority could be reinterpreted to mean a great expansion of co-operation between London and Dublin (even to some extent institutionalised) but in no way menacing Ulster's place in the Kingdom, something might be achieved."

*The Times* carried the most critical

editorial, describing the Forum report as "the same essence in a new bottle." It declared: "It is an extraordinary proposition that is being suggested to the British Government. It is in effect being asked to tell close on a million of its citizens that they and the rest of the Kingdom would be better off if the province of which they constitute a substantial minority were ceded to the neighbouring State, and that they are to prepare themselves to agree to exchange an allegiance they are fierce to retain for one they have a loathing to assume."

Nonetheless, the editorial ends: "The (Forum's) case deserves examination before dismissal, and we shall return to it."

*The Guardian*, which has traditionally been sympathetic to Irish nationalism, describes the Forum report as a powerful, challenging and refreshingly frank critique of British crisis management in Northern Ireland. It said: "The Forum is courteous, if firm, in its disapproval of British actions past and present."

"Possibly Ireland's own failings need an equally courteous, if firm, exposure. The Forum's report is an offer, as we read it, to start again where Lloyd George and de Valera made their mistakes. And that is an offer which should be gratefully accepted."

## British Press in part agreement

THE FORUM report received Editorial comment in almost all the main British newspapers most of them ruling out the option of a United Ireland in the near

future but saying the document could lead to dialogue between the British and Irish Governments.

The Financial Times gives the Forum report an unqualified welcome and says although it does not offer a set formula, it is a major departure from the Nationalist thinking of the past.

In many ways, according to the Financial Times, the Report is a plea for help: "The Irish constitutional nationalist have put their act together and are now looking to Britain and to the Unionists for a response. It is essential that the response should be positive."

"In the Forum the elected leaders of Irish nationalism, North and South, have another go at procuring what their grandfathers and fathers failed to procure, Irish unification in a condition of independence," says the London Times.

The Times goes on: "The judgement that Irish unity is only to be had on the basis of consent by the people of Northern Ireland of whom the majority is unionist, is both a moral and a practical judgement."

Despite the headline "An Irish Mouse", the Daily Telegraph gives a grudging welcome to the Report. It says the only option which can be given any sort of consideration is the proposal of joint British Irish authority over the North.

The Report provides a challenging, if not exhaustive, series of ideas for ending the 'distress' of Northern Ireland, says the Guardian. The analysis is in part familiar, in part "refreshingly frank." The notion that there is nothing that can be done about Northern Ireland, has become central to British politics, says the Guardian and it is a dangerous and defeatist notion which has existed since the collapse of Sunningdale.

The Daily Express says that it will be difficult for Mrs. Thatcher to claim no interest in fresh political thinking from Dublin. "She should — and no doubt will — consider the point raised in the Report . . . It would be wholly wrong to start arranging the destiny of the British citizens of Northern Ireland over their heads. And to its credit, the Forum recognises this, just as it acknowledges the strength of British feeling within the Protestant population".

# Yankees v: the Irish

ONE OF the great worries which confronted all of those who took part in the work of the New Ireland Forum was the fear that after the work had been completed, either the whole process would be misunderstood, or the point of the entire exercise missed by those to whom the report was largely aimed — the British government and public.

For those of us involved in the Forum, our task was long-range, not instant. There was always the danger that the nature of what the Forum was about would not be fully understood.

What the Forum was doing was trying to provide a new framework, within which the problem of Northern Ireland could be examined afresh. Within that there would be certain key elements, including a nationalist analysis of the problem; an assessment of past policies; an attempt to understand the mind and fears of the Unionists; a hard-nosed assessment of the economic costs, both of division and of any possible solution; a series of ideas as to how the problems could best be tackled, and an examination of possible structures within which it could be tackled.

## Maurice Manning on the implications of the Forum report

We saw the Forum report as a package which was not a final answer, but which would provide a basis upon which serious dialogue could begin and which would fill the vacuum which has characterised Northern politics since Sunningdale.

Straight away it must be said that from the perspective of the British media, the work of the Forum has been understood, has been taken seriously, and for the most part, has received thoughtful and sympathetic analysis.

Indeed, it is a long time since the whole question of Anglo-Irish relations has been taken so seriously by the British media.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the most enthusiastic endorsement of the Forum's work came from *The Guardian*, which has always been sympathetic to the Southern predicament with regard to the North. For a start, that paper endorsed the Forum's overriding sense of urgency, and attacked a notion, apparently deeply entrenched in British politics, "that there is nothing one can do about Northern Ireland".

"It is", said *The Guardian*, "a dangerous and defeatist notion which came to full flower during Mr. Harold Wilson's

Prime Ministership, when he allowed the painfully built edifice of Sunningdale to collapse under the Protestant workers' strike. Now ought to be the time to get rid of this notion".

Significantly too, *The Guardian* differs from the official British response to the Forum's analysis of British policy in the North. That analysis had proved unacceptable to Mr. Prior, but according to *The Guardian*, what the Forum has produced is "a powerful critique of British crisis management in Northern Ireland and a challenging, if not exhaustive, series of ideas for ending the Province's distress. The analysis is in part familiar, in part refreshingly frank".

*The Guardian*, however, has little time for the Forum's preferred solution of a unitary state, and would have preferred to see us being a little more frank about our own failings in the past, but feels, however, on balance that the case made by the Forum "so cogently" requires to be taken totally seriously and sees no reason why serious dialogue must not begin.

Very encouraging too for the members of the Forum was the attitude taken by *The Financial Times*, which in recent times, had been advocating an adventurous

change of heart by the British in their attitude to both Anglo-Irish relations and to the problem of Northern Ireland.

Like *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times* is enthusiastic about what the Forum has achieved. Perhaps most importantly of all, from the long-term point of view, it shares the Forum's view of the responsibility and of the possibilities of the British government: "It is incomparable the most powerful presence on the stages if it chooses to use its power. The opportunity is now ripe. It is up to Britain to pick it up from there."

Nobody on the Forum could have asked for a more positive response than that, and coming from *The Financial Times*, it is certain to be listened to by many in Whitehall and Westminster.

This position is strengthened even further when that paper urges the British Government not to place Northern Ireland low on the political agenda, and even puts a timescale, and urges Mrs. Thatcher to make an Irish Settlement a priority for the next four years.

*The Times* is less enthusiastic and looks coldly at the practical reality of a united Ireland as contained in the Forum. It

sees little incentive for the British Government to embark on a radical change, but it does concede that the case made by the Forum deserves at the very least serious consideration.

It is on the extreme right that the surprises begin. In the past, *The Daily Telegraph* would limply have dismissed any ideas from the Republic, or any discussion of Northern Ireland from the Republic as impertinent and without any moral or political justification. But now, even *The Daily Telegraph* takes the Forum seriously, and sees a certain merit in the ideas on joint authority. That in itself is an enormous advance.

But perhaps most surprising of all is the reaction of *The Daily Express*, which has so often been mindlessly negative and dismissive of Dublin's role. It also sees some merit to the report, and urges the British government to re-think its own policy, while in that same paper the influential *George Gael* urges fundamental and radical re-thinking on the British government.

So all in all then, the members of the Forum cannot complain that they were ignored or their purpose misunderstood.

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1005

FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1984

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# Irish Independent

# British papers react favourably to report

REACTION to the New Ireland Forum Report in yesterday's British newspapers was mainly favourable, and an article in the front page of The Observer states that Mr. Jim Prior is determined to launch a major new political initiative in Northern Ireland based on the report.

An editorial under the heading "A Time To Act" in the Sunday Times states that joint authority for Northern Ireland is an alternative worth examining, while an editorial entitled "Ireland: A New Start" in The Observer, advises that "no British Government can stand idly by while extremism gathers strength in Ulster".

Journalist Ivan Rowan in a commentary in the Sunday Telegraph writes that possibly the least Britain can do is "reply with a Forum of our own, to which the Unionists should be given an invitation they scarcely refuse".

The Observer's political editor, Adam Raphael, in a front page story reports that a three-pronged initiative on the North is being considered by the Northern Ireland Ireland secretary, Mr. Prior.

The approach involves, Raphael writes, "a plan for a new measure of devolved government in Northern Ireland on the basis of power sharing between the communities; joint authority by London and Dublin over such areas as security and possibly agriculture, industry and tourism; and a joint Anglo-Irish parliamentary council to

whom these authorising joint authority would report".

The report says that Mr. Prior is determined to launch a major initiative but it is dependent on his being able to persuade Mrs. Thatcher "that the risks of doing nothing are even greater than the risks of an initiative".

Raphael's report concludes: "The Northern Ireland Secretary believes there is a good deal of room for discussion both in Belfast and Dublin around the Forum's avowed willingness to discuss 'other views' which would not imply a change in the province's constitutional position.

"This suggests that joint Anglo-Ireland institutions covering both the economy and security could play a significant part in any new initiative."

The Sunday Times editorial states that Mr. Prior must react to the Forum. "In the South as well as the North, lawlessness increasingly supplants politics. The South's cry of alarm in the report deserves to be heard," it states.

"Mr. Prior should move among the Unionist leaders of the North and say to them that Britain backs their right to decide where they belong; but that, in return, they have to recognise that two-fifths of the people in the North feel another loyalty, and must be cut in on local influence."

"The Forum report offers one alternative worth examining: joint authority for London and Dublin in the North.

"This gives Mr. Prior his second opening. Joint authority

as expounded in the report looks close to joint sovereignty, and sovereignty over the North is not for sale; but joint authority could be very helpful if it meant real co-operation in matters of security—ready extradition of suspected terrorists from South to North, full communication between the two armies on the Border."

In an interview with Dr. FitzGerald by Chris Ryder in the same page of paper, the Taoiseach is quoted as saying it was important to throw a dish of cold water on the question of Irish unity. The Government now had made the question of Irish unity an "indefinite dream", wrote Ryder, and this was also very much welcomed by the paper's editorial.

Dr. FitzGerald is also quoted in the article as saying the crucial thing now was to accommodate the nationalistic and unionist identities "in a way neither can be subordinate to the other". The Taoiseach's first priority was to hammer out with his Cabinet a detailed policy with which to open discussions with the British.

The Taoiseach will meet Mrs. Thatcher in Bordeaux at the FEC talks and a summit will follow in the autumn, the report says.

The Firm had put the problem of Northern Ireland squarely back on the political agenda and "that in itself must be good, for benign neglect of Northern Ireland has been the curse of British policy for far too long," says The Observer editorial.

"The dangers of doing nothing were even greater than those of doing something," says the editorial. And overseas opinion also must be considered. "If Britain is seen to reject out of hand all possible avenues of political advance then pressures from our European partners and the United States are bound to increase," the Observer states.

"Foreign opinion is important since the IRA gets most of its arms and much of its finance from abroad."

The Taoiseach in an article specially written for the Sunday Express stresses that the report "does not demand

## If not the forum way, then how?

For all the travails which beset its final sittings the New Ireland Forum has now produced a powerful critique of British crisis management in Northern Ireland and a challenging, if not exhaustive, series of ideas for ending that province's distress. Both are far too serious to receive only the curmudgeonly nod. The analysis is in part familiar, in part refreshingly frank. That is to say, the arrangements which evolved between 1920 and 1925 destroyed the historic unity of Ireland, drove Irish nationalism to express itself in terms of separation from Britain, favoured the growth in Ulster of institutions from which Catholics were largely excluded, and ensured "that for two generations there has been no unionist participation in political structures at an all-Ireland level. Rather, the southern state has evolved without the benefit of unionist influence." It is because the four constitutional nationalist parties of Ireland have, for the first time, stated their case in agreed, reasoned, and sometimes self-critical terms that a serious British response will be required. For the forum is right to say that the immediate outlook for the North is extremely dangerous and that "as sensibilities have become dulled and despair has deepened, there has been a progressive erosion of basic human values which is in danger of becoming irreversible."

Every Irish nationalist, and possibly some unionists too, will assent to the description of events which transpired after the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, led to partition. The forum was not concerned to scrutinise the way the Republic developed, though it acknowledges in passing the imperfections of the state as seen through unionist eyes and offers a transformation in Irish politics if the unionists are interested in joining. What it does, however, is to argue the case for unity in one of three models, or for a condominium with Britain, in such direct terms that it may, in the absence of movement in any of those directions, provide more fuel for Sinn Fein. For

if, once again, Britain is unable to find a means of meeting Catholic requirements in the North then Sinn Fein is left with the argument that the forum has failed by constitutional methods and that the only way of securing the forum's own objectives is through violence.

That this would be a highly dangerous outcome does not need stressing. It would also be a deeply ironical one. The forum was the brainchild of Mr John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, and was seized upon by the parties in the Republic as the means of stopping the drift of northern voters into the Sinn Fein camp. As things stand it is not impossible that Sinn Fein will beat the SDLP at the local elections in a year's time (and may even poll undesirably well in the European elections in June). If that were to happen it would not necessarily mean that all Sinn Fein voters were committed to violence. It would mean that they see no way of influencing either British or the unionist majority through a constitutional party.

It is clearly because he too might be outflanked by Sinn Fein as the standard-bearer of republicanism that Mr Haughey has insisted at the forum that the case for a unitary state be given priority. Unfortunately, though, the whole argument here is in the subjunctive. There are two reasons why that should be. One is that Protestants will find a unitary state unthinkable at least for another generation. The other is that the forum report is at its weakest in the very exuberance with which it defers to Protestant views and promises to protect every unionist tradition. "It is clear that a new Ireland will require a new constitution which will ensure that the needs of all traditions are fully met." The unionists' "sense of Britishness" must be accommodated. "Lasting stability can be found only in the context of new structures in which no tradition will be allowed to dominate the other." And more of the same. Yet surely the essence of Britishness is the ability to vote for and be governed by a British parliament under British laws. Although the forum avows that in a unitary state British citizens would continue to have such citizenship and pass it on to their children, it is not at all clear how that citizenship would express itself in practice. The argument here comes perilously close to acknowledging not only that partition was a mistake but that the severance between Britain and

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Ireland was a mistake also. If it was, and if the road back to a united Ireland leads also to a reunion of the two islands in some all-embracing confederation (not a novel idea, incidentally, for nationalist historians to contemplate) then the forum should have said so. Certainly it speaks of a new "structure, relationships and associations with Britain . . . which would acknowledge the unique relationship." But one would like to hear more.

Secondly there is a distinct logical hiatus in the discussion of a unitary state. In this arrangement "provision could be made for weighted majorities in the Parliament in regard to legislation effecting changes in provisions on issues agreed to be fundamental at the establishment of the new state. In the Senate unionists could be guaranteed a minimum number of seats . . . Mechanisms for ensuring full Northern participation in an integrated Irish civil service would have to be devised." It is precisely these and similar methods of protecting minority interests within a recreated Stormont that nationalists have found inadequate for Northern Ireland. There is no obvious reason why a unionist minority in Ireland as a whole should find them any more attractive.

It is possible that the unitary state was given the place of honour among the proposals for form's sake. If so, that is a dangerous way to proceed. It could well be that in the discussion which the forum invites, its other options — a federal or confederal system, or joint authority over the North between Ireland and Britain — would yield a practicable method of ending the conflict. But that could only be so if it was accepted in full and final settlement of the Irish Republic's claims. If it were still open to republican parties, violent or non-violent, to continue the campaign by saying that Irish unity was still incomplete then a constitutional upheaval would have taken place for nothing.

The notion that there is nothing one can do about Northern Ireland has become central to British politics. It is a dangerous and defeatist notion which came to full flower during Mr Harold Wilson's prime ministership when he allowed the painfully built edifice of Sunningdale to collapse under the Protestant workers' strike. Now ought to be the time to get rid of it. Labour draws a distinction between the British guarantee, under which constitutional changes will not take place without the

consent of a majority, and the unionist veto which has been allowed to obstruct even the cosmetic introduction of an Irish dimension into the politics of the North. That distinction is valid. Dublin recognises as clearly as anyone that unity, in whatever form, achieved otherwise than by consent would be valueless. It is entitled to insist, however, that the record and results of partition be fully understood before it is enshrined as the only possible formula for administering the province. When the Irish parties jointly express their opinion as cogently as they have now done they merit an equally substantive, and if possible collective, reply. If the only solution is for Ireland to yield something as well in order to reshuffle the constitutional pack then that should be plainly stated. The forum is courteous, if firm, in its disapproval of British actions past and present. Possibly Ireland's own failings need an equally courteous, if firm, exposure. The forum's report is an offer, as we read it, to start again where Lloyd George and de Valera made their mistakes. And that is an offer which should be gratefully accepted.

## The outraged class of '84

The teachers' pay dispute is seemingly now locked into a campaign of inexorable and escalating disruption. Attitudes on both sides appear to be hardening every day. The teachers have thrown out the employers' improved offer of 4.5 per cent. The employers have thrown out the idea of arbitration. The teachers have already embarked on selective disruption in schools. On May 9 the NUT has called a one-day strike, and teachers are now thinking the unthinkable—disrupting public examinations later in the term. Sir Keith Joseph has condemned the teachers as irresponsible and has wrung his hands over the fate of the schoolchildren who will suffer, but has refused to intervene in the dispute, saying that the teachers and the employers will have to resolve their own differences. Such aloofness is, of course, a touch disingenuous when his own department has enough votes on the Burnham committee to settle the dispute; by backing the employers, Sir Keith is already a major participant in this drama.

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Thursday May 3, 1984

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If there is one thing worse than the prospect of disruption to children's education, it is the knowledge that it was eminently avoidable. This is a confrontation that should never have been allowed to happen. Its sources enjoy a displeasing symmetry: the employers pitched their original offer insultingly low, the teachers pitched their original claim unattainably high. In between, there were informal soundings which could have formed an eventual settlement. The employers were talking about 4 per cent and arbitration; but upon learning that the teachers wanted 12.5 per cent, withdrew the suggestion and deadlock set in at 3 per cent.

Now, the absurd position has been reached in which the teachers have been offered 4.5 per cent, which once they would have accepted, but now will not. The employers once would have offered arbitration, but now will not. In addition, the employers would apparently have offered 4 per cent and arbitration had the teachers pitched their original claim at around seven per cent. Now the teachers say that seven per cent is the bottom line; the employers say this is quite unacceptable. None of this makes much sense; but then, once an impasse is reached, logic and consistency tend to fly out of the classroom window.

At bottom, however, the teachers have a good, indeed an exemplary case. Considering the importance of the job they do, and the difficulties under which they are expected to labour, they are paid derisory salaries. Their poor standing in the pay league is due partly to their fragmented union structure and mainly to their lack of political muscle; and their poor political muscle is due to the fact that, like, say, the nurses, they are known to be unwilling to sacrifice their vulnerable customers on the altar of the annual pay round. The nurses, however, were pushed a bit too far and the result of all that was their review body (although whether the Government will honour its recommendations is another matter). Whether the teachers have reached the point at which they really will damage children's futures to get more money still remains to be seen. They may well do so, of course, if Sir Keith continues to mix it with insulting comparisons between teachers and police officers and threats about the long term pay restructuring talks. If that restructuring is damaged by this dispute, however, both sides will have shot themselves in the foot.

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3 MAY 1984

"THE WAY FROM THE FORUM"

The Report of the New Ireland Forum, published yesterday, deserves an unqualified welcome from all those who want a peaceful solution to the Irish question. The Report offers no set formula - not even the blueprint for one. But it is a major departure from the nationalist thinking of the past.

For the first time, the nationalist parties in Ireland which believe in democracy have come together to recognise a common problem: namely, the danger to the Republic, to Ulster and even to Britain, if the present situation is allowed to continue indefinitely. In so doing, they have visibly shed a great deal of their previous theology.

Here are some examples. The Report admits that Irish nationalist attitudes have hitherto "tended to underestimate the full dimension of the unionist identity and ethos." It acknowledges that the unionists' identity includes a "sense of Britishness" and a "set of values comprising a Protestant ethos which they believe to be under threat from a Catholic ethos." And it states frankly that the political arrangements for a new and sovereign Ireland would have to be "freely negotiated and agreed to by the people of the North and the people of the South."

The Report is as remarkable for what it omits as for what it says. There are no crude references to "troops out" and indeed not even the ghost of a timetable is suggested for a solution. What is clear, however, is that Irish unity, though still the goal, has become a distant aspiration rather than an immediate political aim. Reality has taken over.

In many ways, the Report is a plea for help. The Irish constitutional nationalists have put their act together and are now looking to Britain and to the unionists for a response. (The unionists, in fact, were invited to participate in the Forum, but chose not to).

It is essential that the response should be positive. With total accuracy, the Report describes British policy towards Northern Ireland over the last few years as one of "crisis management" and little else. Again to quote the Forum, the policy has not brought peace, nor stability, nor reconciliation between the two communities in Ulster. British policy, we would add, has reached a dead end where the best that can be looked forward to is a continuation of the unsatisfactory status quo. The Report of the Forum offers the beginnings of a way out.

Yet the British Government should not underestimate its own strength. It is incomparably the most powerful presence on the stage, if it chooses to use its power. The opportunity is now ripe. Here are the democratic parties of the Republic forsaking Irish unity for the foreseeable future, denouncing the IRA as never before and showing a new understanding of the unionist/Protestant tradition. It is up to Britain to pick it up from there.

The first point is that there can be no unity between North and South until there has been some reconciliation between the communities in the North. That means a rigorous assault on political and religious prejudice wherever it may be manifest. It means standing up to Protestant and Conservative Party extremists who think that the union is sacrosanct whatever the unionists may do. There are some unionist leaders whose behaviour, for all their protestations of loyalty to the Crown, is scarcely British. They can no longer be allowed an excessive influence on British policy.

It probably also means making another attempt at putting life into the Ulster Assembly. If there is to be a reconciliation between the communities, they will have to show that they can work together in common institutions. The Assembly is as good a starting point as any, if only because it is there. The Catholic SDLP needs to be pressed to take up its seats in return for solid assurances that it will be allowed a greater say in its affairs. The democratic parties in the South, having come thus far, ought to be capable of adding their own urgings. For only when there is peace in the North can there be peace in Ireland.

The second and crucial point is simply this. No British policy will get anywhere if it is half-hearted and low on the political agenda. Mrs Thatcher has an opportunity denied to almost all her predecessors. She should make an Irish settlement a priority for the next four years.

**Irish Forum calls for united Ireland**

A report from a new forum set up in the north of Ireland today calls for a united Ireland. The report, which was published yesterday, is the first of its kind. It was produced by the New Ireland Forum, set up last year by political leaders in the north and south.

The report welcomed parts of the report but attacked its criticism of British rule as "one-sided and unacceptable."

The Forum calls for a united Ireland achieved by agreement and consent of the people of the North and South, but there is also a call for the British Government to rethink its attitude to Ulster.

The report said British policy had helped perpetuate violence by enforcing supremacy of the Unionist and disregard of the Catholics.

But it hits out hard against Ulster Protestant violence.

"Every act of murder and violence makes a just solution more difficult to achieve," it says.

PRIOR Unimproved

# **Irish Forum**

## **Ireland's choice**

THERE have been as many attempts to solve the Irish problem as there have been martyrs who have died because of it.

The latest came yesterday in the report of the New Ireland Forum. It is serious and intelligent. In it the Catholics go farther to meet the Protestants than ever before.

But its chances of success are regrettably remote.

The report recognises the sense of Britishness of the Northern Protestants. It accepts that future agreement can only be voluntary, not imposed.

It is uncompromising in denouncing the men of violence, which is again an advance on the past.

Its weakness is that only the Catholic parties of the North and South would take part in it.

### **Suffering**

Though the crisis in the North, with its suffering and misery and catastrophic economic outlook, should be obvious to everyone, the Protestants refused to discuss it.

And their refusal is part of the fundamental problem, which remains the British rule in Northern Ireland.

There will never be an agreement on the future of Ireland while the Catholics in the North look to Dublin for protection and the Protestants look to London.

The Irish must decide their own fate, free from Britain's involvement. Until that is accepted there will be no permanent peace.

**EXPRESS**  **OPINION**

## **No-go ideas on Ulster**

**O**NE British response to the report of the New Ireland Forum would be huffily to dismiss it out of hand.

After all, Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. No one asked a Dublin Government and Irish political parties to deliberate for almost a year about its problems.

That will be the response of some, but it would be wrong.

The Forum's suggestions, ill-formed as they may be, have the virtue of forcing the British Government to think deeply about Ulster.

For too long it has seemed prepared simply to jog along with its Northern Ireland policy, trying to hold down violence to the present levels.

It would be difficult for Mrs Thatcher to claim no interest in fresh political thinking from Dublin. She should—and no doubt will—consider the points raised in the report.

But it would be unrealistic to think the British Government could start giving immediate serious attention to the Forum's recommended options—a unitary Irish State, or a federal Irish State, or joint London—Dublin sovereignty over Ulster.

It would be wholly wrong to start arranging the destiny of the British citizens of Northern Ireland over their heads.

And to its credit, the Forum recognises this, just as it acknowledges the strength of British feeling within the Protestant population.

Perhaps some long-term fundamental change will come about, based on the Forum's work.

Meanwhile, Dublin's own good faith could be best demonstrated by even greater co-operation with the British Government in combatting terrorism.

**Time for reality** X

**THE DAILY TELEGRAPH**

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 1984

135, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

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**AN IRISH MOUSE**

**YESTERDAY'S REPORT** by the New Ireland Forum can realistically be judged only by one criterion—the extent to which it reveals any modification of the Irish nationalist position likely to improve relations between the two Governments and promote understanding between Unionists and Nationalists in Ireland. By that standard, the report is a strangely mixed bag. Its “background analysis” of the origins of the present troubles is a biased and trite restatement of the old charges against Britain and the Ulster Protestants. A further debit is the promotion to first preference of all the four parties involved in the Forum of the suggestion that Ulster should simply be absorbed (by consent, of course!) into a unitary Irish State equipped with various vaguely defined guarantees of minority rights.

This was, no doubt, a concession to Mr HAUGHEY, who might otherwise have walked out. Dr FITZGERALD's own proposals for a federal or a confederal Ireland have been relegated to the rank of second best. Since all these schemes, however, would involve Ulster's leaving the United Kingdom, all are wholly unacceptable, and it does not matter much which is preferred to the others.

Attention in Britain and Northern Ireland, therefore, will concentrate on the third proposed model—joint British-Irish authority over the Six Counties. One gets the impression, however, that, by the time the Forum got down to writing this section it must have been very tired indeed; for the plan is sketched so scantily as to leave almost everything to the reader's imagination. What would happen when the two Governments disagreed?

Yet, if this part of the report is meant seriously, does it not yield a glimmer of hope, implying, as it would seem to, a retreat from the goal of Irish unity? If “joint authority” could be reinterpreted to mean a great expansion of co-operation between London and Dublin (even to some extent institutionalised) but in no way diminishing Westminster's sovereignty over the Six Counties and in no way menacing Ulster's place in the kingdom, something might be achieved.



4 May 1984

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## ONE ISLAND: TWO NATIONS

The germ of the idea of a New Ireland Forum was in the mind of Mr John Hume in the autumn of 1982. It was a way of floating his party off the sands of abstention where it had run aground on the way to Mr Prior's forthcoming assembly. In the course of the forum's deliberations last year and this, the mission to rescue the SDLP assumed growing importance. It was beginning to look as if constitutional nationalism, of which the SDLP is the embodiment in Northern Ireland, might go under if it could not show more measurable progress towards its ultimate objective. The forum and what followed from it were to supply the want.

By now there is serious anxiety (reflected in the urgency, desperation almost, of some passages in the forum report) that the resilience of the Provisional IRA, the electoral advance of Sinn Fein, its political front, the spreading alienation of some Catholic areas of Northern Ireland, and deterioration of the north's economy and social fabric will lead to more widespread conflict and commotion. It is feared that instability could then spill over to the republic, where Sinn Fein is already feeding on urban deprivation and pockets of social anarchy.

Ireland has undergone both rebellion and civil war earlier in this century. The embers of the first still glow in the north east and combustible material from the second lies around. A recrudescence of civil strife over the face of Ireland, or even a retreat from constitutional forms, would be hardly less injurious to Britain than it would to Ireland itself.

The matter can be exaggerated. Nationalist parties in Northern Ireland have sunk before, losing their votes to patrons of physical force, without the arrival of doomsday. The state is strong in the republic, and the first thought of most of

the people there about the conflict in the north is how not to get embroiled. But the dangers drawn in the forum report are real and mounting. It is by reference to them that its authors have their best hope of getting a British government to abandon her policy of holding the ring in Northern Ireland and assume a role that the forum's logic implies for it: to do the necessary to budge Ulster unionism out of its refusal to contemplate a change of nation into a readiness to negotiate for it.

The dangers the forum describes should be acknowledged. Its analysis of their causes is illuminating though incomplete. But the way the forum faces at the end (which is the way it faced at the beginning) is not the only or surest direction in which the analysis points.

The problem is to accommodate in one space two political cultures that are in contention over nationality, Irish nationalism and Ulster unionism. An earlier Dr Garret FitzGerald saw that the route to reconciliation within Ireland as a whole lay through mutual accommodation of the two traditions within Northern Ireland. That necessary first accommodation has now been made more difficult by the forum's emphasis on an unavailable short cut to Irish political unity.

Approaches that have importance for the internal reconciliation of Northern Ireland were looked at in the report. One is for the means of institutional expression and licit display of the pan-Irish ambitions of Roman Catholic citizens in the province. The Ulster Unionist party's position paper that came out just before the forum report nibbled at this. There is at least some overlap there from which to start.

Another relevant approach is by means of associating Dublin with aspects of the administration of Northern Ireland at an

inter-governmental level. This appeared in the forum report in an overblown and impractical form as co-equal responsibility for all aspects of government in Northern Ireland. In both cases useful approaches to the immediate problems of the province have been rendered less useful by their inclusion in a strategy to bring about the political unification of the two parts of Ireland, something that, if it is to be, has to be placed either in the distant future or at the conclusion of an Irish civil war.

The forum is very confident that Ulster unionism could be adequately catered for without the union. By the same token the lot of Irish nationalism in that corner of the island need not be intolerable even though separated from its political nation. That is how another sizable chunk of the Irish nation lives, in apparent contentment, in Great Britain.

That condition cannot be reached without large changes in the institutions of Northern Ireland and the attitudes of Ulster Protestantism. The nationalist community in the north deserves a better place in the sun; it must be afforded, and it must be ready to accept, a constructive role in the affairs of the province. There is much in the forum report that could be turned to account for that purpose. The "nationalist identity" of up to two-fifths of the people of the province could and should be acknowledged in any way that is compatible with the firm anchorage of the province in the United Kingdom.

Those are the openings in the work of the forum that Mr Prior should be ready to explore, with some firmness towards unionist reluctance. Mr Haughey having jumped overboard within hours of publication, Dr FitzGerald may feel freer to explore those openings too.

# THE OBSERVER

8, Spink Street, London EC4V 5JA. 01-253 0202.

## Ireland: A new start

THERE have been few hopeful moments during the past 15 years in Northern Ireland. They have been years of political stalemate and terrible bloodshed. Since the failure of the Sunningdale power-sharing arrangement in 1974, successive British Governments have, in effect, despaired of achieving a political solution and opted instead for crisis management.

The New Ireland Forum's report, published last week, offers the possibility — no more than that — of a less bleak future. For the first time, the political parties in North and South who are committed to the unification of Ireland by peaceful means have agreed on a common route forward. In doing so, they have had to face the reality that a united Ireland can come about only with the consent of the majority Protestant population in the North. For the first time, the major parties in the Republic have publicly acknowledged that Ulster Unionists regard themselves as British and that any future constitutional arrangements will have to protect their way of life and national identity.

These are important advances, even if the report is remarkably short on ways in which the institutions it seeks to promote can safeguard this sense of 'Britishness.' The report's over-emphasis on the option of a unitary state is a mistake, made worse by Mr Haughey's cynical display of shillelagg-waving at the post-signing Press conference. But it does contain a commitment to gradual agreed change that could, at least, provide a starting-point for a new dialogue between London and Dublin.

The Forum's report comes at a critical moment for Northern Ireland. Ten years ago, the father of the Price sisters, the convicted IRA killers, stood as a parliamentary candidate in West Belfast and lost his deposit. It is a measure of the deadly political route travelled by the province in the past decade that the same seat is now represented by Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin, whose avowed policy is 'a ballot paper in one hand and an Armalite rifle in the other.'

It is this deterioration in the political climate—aggravated by the boycott of Mr Prior's Assembly by three out of five of Ulster's parties—that makes the publica-

tion of the Forum's report both an opportunity and a dilemma for the British Government. The risk of using the report, even as a basis for talks with the Republic, is that it would increase tensions in the North. Any new institutional links with Dublin would stir up bitter resistance, not just in Northern Ireland but also among Tory MPs at Westminster.

All this might suggest that Mrs Thatcher would be wise to let the report moulder on the shelves. But, to quote the late Iain Macleod, the dangers of doing nothing are even greater than those of doing something, which is why the timing of the Forum report is so crucial. No British Government can stand idly by while extremism gathers strength in Ulster, with those who encourage violence capturing votes from those who condemn it.

There is also overseas opinion to consider. If Britain is seen to reject out of hand all possible avenues of political advance, then pressures from our European partners and the United States are bound to increase. Foreign opinion is important, since the IRA gets most of its arms and much of its finance from abroad.

How the British Government will react to the Forum depends almost entirely on Mrs Thatcher. Mr Prior will no doubt try hard to persuade her that the report offers an opportunity to be seized rather than an embarrassment to be ignored. Yet this is advice which runs counter to the Prime Minister's own instincts. She is, at heart, both a patriot and a Unionist.

Moreover, Mrs Thatcher has already been bitten once in the cause of Anglo-Irish unity by the charms of the former Taoiseach, Mr Charles Haughey. She is bound to regard the offered embrace of Dr Garret FitzGerald with suspicion. And yet, despite this, Mrs Thatcher must know that she cannot afford to turn her back completely on the Forum. Whatever else it succeeds in doing, it has put the problem of Northern Ireland squarely back on the political agenda. That in itself must be good, for benign neglect of Northern Ireland has been the curse of British policy for far too long.

(c) Other Analyses and Comment





**GEORGE GALE** COLUMNIST OF THE YEAR

# Now I beg Mrs Thatcher to concentrate her mind and energies upon the Irish problem

**I** T CANNOT possibly be said that Britain's direct ruling of Ulster has succeeded.

Disorder and violence persist; the two communities grow further apart; the politics of the extremes flourish; those of the centre do not hold.

Although the status quo in Northern Ireland ought not to be tolerated in the United Kingdom, the British Government's policy has been, in any case, well advised indefinitely to maintain that status quo.

Not since Edward Heath, spooked by the civil rights demonstrations and the loss of control over events of the Stormont regime, abolished Stormont and introduced direct rule in 1972 has a British prime minister devoted his or her major energy to the Irish problem. It has been shunted aside.

The British public cannot be criticised too heavily for its neglect of Northern Ireland when British politicians of all parties have been all too eager to banish it from their attention.



Mrs. Thatcher and Dr. FitzGerald . . . new way forward

# British funding 'must continue'

By Paul Johnson

ANY political model will depend crucially on British payments and subsidies continuing, concludes an economic analysis commissioned by the Forum.

If these were withdrawn and not replaced "catastrophic economic adjustments" would be required.

The analysis, published yesterday, says that loss of British subvention — estimated at more than £1,200 million this year — would be equivalent to losing about 8 per cent of the gross domestic product of the North and South. Any attempt to offset the effect through foreign borrowing would fail.

The analysis by DKM economic consultants, concludes that the cheapest option would be joint authority.

Its authors, Professor Norman Gibson, of the New University of Ulster, and Professor Dermot McAleese, of Trinity College, Dublin, say that this is because the North's economy has become dependent on British support. Violence and political instability have contributed to its chronic weakness.

The analysis estimates that joint authority would cost Dublin around £60 million a year, if the violence stopped. The Federal solution could cost up to £231 million by 1994.

It estimates that British subvention constitutes around 27 per cent of the North's GDP.

In a federal state the burden of adjusting to reduced external aid would fall almost exclusively on the North. This would "effectively rule out this option unless substantial foreign aid was available or the South was prepared to make direct and explicit transfers." The study shows that the North's economic outlook is bleak so long ago as violence continues. Virtual stagnation in the economy would be matched by unemployment rising to almost 32 per cent of the adult population by the 1990s.

NORTHERN IRELAND: A

# The door that m

By Margaret va

AMONG THE most important witnesses to give evidence to the New Ireland Forum were Christopher and Michael McGimpsey, two brothers from Belfast who are members of the Official Unionist Party.

If the McGimpsey brothers were English, rather than British, they would probably be regarded as the wettest of wets in the Tory Party. The mere fact that, as members of the OUP, they consented to go to Dublin last January to give evidence to the Forum, which had been boycotted by all their party leaders, immediately places them on the moderate fringe of unionism.

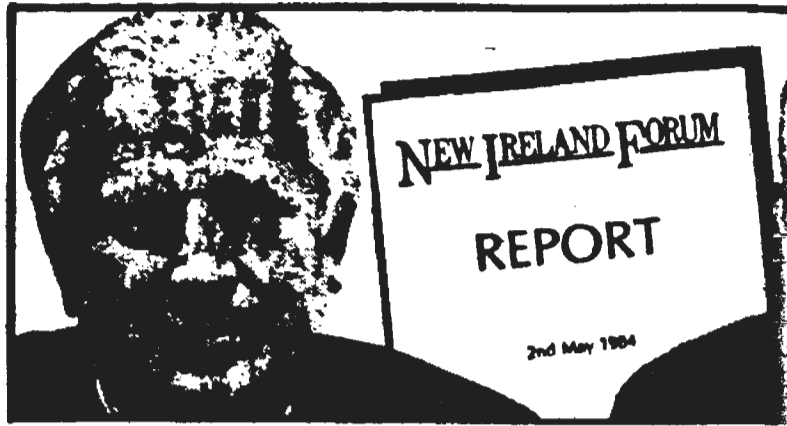
Yet even they told the Forum in unmistakable terms: "I do not believe any Southern Irish Government could make up an attractive enough package to attract us into a united Ireland . . . we do not want a united Ireland under any terms . . .

Were the members of the Forum listening? Does their report's insistence on the need for unionist "consent" to future political developments take account of people like Christopher and Michael McGimpsey? The answer is probably—and somewhat surprisingly—yes. For behind the rhetoric it looks as if a very important door may have been opened.

The extent to which this is the case is the central question that the British Government will focus on in approaching talks with the Irish Government this summer. But the Forum report, published on Wednesday, does contain strong signals that for the first time in 60 years, Irish nationalists—those who hope that Ireland will one day be united—have accepted the right of unionists not to be part of a united Ireland.

But those signals were not spelled out. Rather, they were buried beneath a mass of "greenery," of nods and bows to the traditional nationalist commitment to reunification. The first task facing the British Government will be to tease out those signals and assess whether they were put there to lure the unionists into discussing reunification, or whether they do indeed represent the first tentative steps towards nationalist recognition that reunification is not a realistic option.

If the report's avowed commitment to "remain open to discuss other views"—views other than those implying a change in the constitutional



Digesting the report: Mr James Prior, The Rev

position of Northern Ireland—is sincere, then there is hope of real progress towards a political settlement that would isolate those on both the Loyalist and the Republican side who would seek to impose their views by violence or the threat of it.

In his response to the Forum report, Mr James Prior, the Northern Ireland Secretary, stated the British position with characteristic candour. Ultimately, he suggested, the British Government's view was irrelevant. The British Government would accept anything that was acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland. "But if the Unionists do not accept it, it won't work," he added.

Nevertheless, Mr Prior indicated that Britain had found

enough positive elements in the report to provide a basis for talks with the Irish Government. That, in the view of many involved in setting up the Forum, means that their effort has succeeded in its main objective.

The Forum may initially, as the British believe, have attracted support from the main nationalist parties in the south because it was seen as a lifeline to the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the main constitutional nationalist party in the north.

But the Forum rapidly developed into something more fundamental: a challenge from northern nationalists to southern nationalists to declare the extent of their commitment to reunification. If, as many sus-

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## DUBLIN: THE GOING OF

THOSE WHO HOPED that the New Ireland Forum would make political blood brothers of Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald and Opposition leader Charles Haughey will have been disappointed—as they were probably bound to be.

Mr Haughey said on publication of the Forum report that he would not support any proposal other than a united Ireland. There are already signs in Dublin, however, that he does not want a prolonged row over the strength of the Forum's commitment to Irish unity. There are many in his Fianna Fail party who are flexible on this issue and they are not, in general, among

those who support his leader-ship.

Dr FitzGerald believes that the Forum has given him what he wanted, and what no previous Irish leader has had: a mandate to negotiate with a British government without having Irish unity as his ultimate goal. His advisors believe they also have the endorsement of Mr John Hume of the SDLP for this approach.

This untying of Dr FitzGerald's hands from the bonds of history is seen by him as the real achievement of the Forum, rather than the specific contents of its report. It became clear in March that the parties could not agree on a single common strategy.

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## NORTHERN IRELAND: AFTER THE FORUM

# or that may be opening

By Margaret van Hattem



Digesting the report: Mr James Prier, The Rev Ian Paisley and Mr John Hume

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The Forum may initially, as the British believe, have attracted support from the main nationalist parties in the south because it was seen as a lifeline to the Social Democratic and Labour Party, the main constitutional nationalist party in the north.

But the Forum rapidly developed into something more fundamental: a challenge from northern nationalists to southern nationalists to declare the extent of their commitment to reunification. If, as many sus-

pected, southern commitment was little more than a sentimental yearning, a desire for Irish unity but only on the most comfortable of terms, all expenses paid, the SDLP might be left stranded. Mr John Hume, leader of the SDLP, calculated that if this were the case, it would be better to bring it into the open. Then at least the SDLP would know where it stood.

The Forum has given him his answer. Irish nationalists in the south are not so wedded to the ideal of Irish unity that they are prepared to ignore reality.

Reality, as they have acknowledged for the first time, is that the unionists are British and do not want to be part of a United Ireland; and that without unionist co-operation, Ireland

cannot be reconstructed to suit nationalists. Reality also means, as the report states, that in the absence of a political settlement leading to an end to violence, one in three civilians in Northern Ireland will be unemployed by the 1990s. "Without political progress, the scale of economic and social problems will increase greatly, exacerbating a highly dangerous situation."

This points to the conclusion that in discussing the relative merits of reconstructing Ireland as a unitary state, a federation of two linked states, or two separate sovereign states with joint Anglo-Irish authority in the north, the Forum was making an opening bid.

When the real negotiations start—probably this summer—the nationalists may well,

according to this line of argument, shelve these three proposals and move closer towards the unionist position. The essential requirements of a settlement, as spelled out in the report, do not include British withdrawal or indeed any change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. They appear to point to a Northern Ireland where nationalists are guaranteed a role in running things—an arrangement possibly not all that far removed from what was achieved in the 1973 Sunningdale agreement, though with more active and overt support from the south.

This interpretation of the Forum report is strongly endorsed in government circles in Dublin and is shared by the SDLP. The British Government appears to have picked up what is between the lines of the Forum report and to have approved. But will the Unionists join in? The signs are not as discouraging as they may seem at first glance. There has been movement on the Unionist side lately, signs that the hardliners may be under pressure to soften their approach. Some OUP members want their party to end its boycott of the Assembly.

Reacting to the Forum report, unionist politicians like the Rev Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionists, and Mr James Molyneux, leader of the OUP, gave what sounded like stock unionist responses, dismissing the report as yet another fruitless attempt to coerce Ulster into the south.

Mr Harold McCusker, deputy leader of the OUP, went further. If unionists were being asked to give up their British citizenship, their rights to sit as Westminster MPs, he declared, there could be no talks. If the Irish nationalists wanted to talk about reunification, the unionists would not join them.

But the Forum has not asked unionists to give up their British citizenship—it insists that in any framework, they must be allowed to retain it. Nor does it insist on talking about reunification. The report declares its readiness to discuss "other views"—including, presumably, those which rule out reunification.

The Forum report appears to have opened a door which no unionist leader has actually slammed shut. That is a promising start.

## DUBLIN: THE GOING OF SEPARATE WAYS

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Dr FitzGerald believes that the Forum has given him what he wanted, and what no previous Irish leader has had: a mandate to negotiate with a British government without having Irish unity as his ultimate goal. His advisers believe they also have the endorsement of Mr John Hume of the SDLP for this approach.

This untying of Dr FitzGerald's hands from the bonds of history is seen by him as the real achievement of the Forum, rather than the specific contents of its report. It became clear in March that the parties could not agree on a single common strategy.

Mr Haughey would not abandon Irish unity as the central policy of Fianna Fail, while Dr FitzGerald and Mr Hume were unwilling to be tied to it.

The possibility of a minority report was discussed and the last weeks of the Forum were spent trying to devise a formula which would avoid obvious disagreement. The Labour Party, although small (it captures 10-12 per cent of the vote in the Republic), played an important role at this stage. Its members were the most determined of all that the report should not tie them to Irish unity.

In the end the haggling came down to detail as fine as the difference between a "wish" and a "preference."

All those taking part in the final fulsome speeches in Dublin Castle knew that afterwards they were going their separate ways.

The key question is whether Mr Haughey's reservations will deter the British government from negotiating seriously. He has, after all, a very fair chance of becoming Prime Minister again. Dublin officials believe the opposite may happen, on the grounds that Mr Haughey would be unlikely to make an agreement if he inherited one, but that reaching an accommodation with him would be more difficult than with Dr FitzGerald.

Brendan Keenan  
Dublin Correspondent

Shirley Williams

# Ireland's ball in Thatcher's court

THE TIMES  
FRIDAY 4 MAY 1984

The history of Northern Ireland is the history of lost opportunities. The best prospect for a new start in the province was painfully worked out at Sunningdale, and collapsed in the aftermath of the 1974 general election when the Protestant workers movement struck, effectively defying the Westminster Parliament.

The report of the New Ireland Forum represents another such opportunity. It goes further than the nationalist parties have ever gone before in recognizing and respecting the unionist identity and the Protestant ethos as being as valid a part of the Irish tradition as the nationalist identity and the Catholic ethos. The report is honest about Protestant fears: "Northern Protestants fear that their civil and religious liberties and their unionist heritage would not survive in a united Ireland in which Roman Catholicism would be the religion of the majority of the population". It recognizes the unionist desire to retain the British link. And although the report is critical of Britain's management of Northern Ireland since direct rule was instituted in 1972, it is not lacking in criticism of Republican attitudes. Most important of all, the report is unambiguous in its condemnation of violence and terrorism.

These elements in the report demand an unreserved welcome: the nationalist parties have nailed their colours to the mast of constitutional democracy, albeit that their colours remain green.

The new opportunity must not be allowed to sink under the weight of weariness and dogged despair that now characterizes the British approach to the unyielding problems of Northern Ireland. It is sad that James Prior's first reaction has been to say he is disappointed, and to criticize the report as "one-sided and unacceptable".

The weakness of the report lies, not in its analysis, but in its proposed solutions. The first proposal which is explored in some detail, that for a unitary state, is wholly unrealistic. Its presence demonstrates how much the forum needed the presence of the unionist parties which rejected the invitation to participate.

The one million Northern Protestants will not consent voluntarily to unification. But "consent" coerced by threats of British withdrawal of military or financial support would lead to the existing scenario on an enlarged scale: a disaffected minority which has no sense of belonging to the political entity of which it is a part. The second proposal, for a federation or confederation, is more attractive, but raises some difficult questions. How would decisions be taken? Would the Unionists, in a weighted majority system, in practice have a veto over major matters? What would the "special links" with Britain be? The report stops short at thinking the unthinkable - a confederation of the UK and the Republic - but the logic of the report's proposal, if unionist fears are to be assuaged, suggests that that proposition should be tabled too.

The report, however, is right to be constitutionally imaginative. As it so eloquently says, "political action clearly carries less risk than the rapidly growing danger of letting the present situation drift into further chaos".

The report's solutions are there-

fore at best long term objectives. Two of them deserve serious discussion, as does the idea of a British-based constitutional link. But there are other measures that might create a new spirit of cooperation in the short-term. The Republic of Ireland is the second poorest country in the European Community. In the list of regions, it comes fourth from the bottom, while Northern Ireland comes second from the bottom, only Calabria in Italy being poorer still. So the case for special treatment by the European Community of the two parts of the island of Ireland is overwhelmingly strong.

So why not establish a committee of MEPs from Northern Ireland and the Republic, the balance on the UK side to be drawn from MEPs from the UK mainland, to put forward major schemes for economical and social development which both governments support? Such schemes, jointly advanced, might start with the need to avoid the duplication of provision in energy, education and health to which the forum report refers. The two governments should pledge that any Community funding of these jointly agreed schemes would be additional to national public expenditure. A second measure worth considering is the establishment of a Joint Select Committee of the two legislatures, the House of Commons and the Dail Eireann, to scrutinize legislation affecting religious minorities in either part of Ireland, and to discuss how to protect human rights in both countries. The forum report suggests such a Bill - or alternatively the rights already defined and accepted in international conventions - as a feature of a confederal constitution. But the consolidation of the European declaration of human rights into British and Irish law need not await confederation. It could be done right away.

A third area for cooperation lies in education. The Republic's textbooks and Catholic textbooks in the North report a very different history from British textbooks and those in the state schools of the North. Why not a commission of inspectors and educators to reconcile what children are taught, and to suggest ways of bridging the gulf between the segregated schools?

On security, the proposal for a border force jointly administered by the UK and Republic is worth looking at. It would avoid the problems now inherent in the hot pursuit of terrorists fleeing across the border.

The SDLP should reconsider its boycott of the Assembly. Before functional powers are given to that Assembly, a convincing power-sharing structure needs to be established possibly going back to the idea of strong committees, some chaired by members of the opposition.

I hope the Government will use the forum report as a basis for its Anglo-Irish discussions, but, better, it should move towards a second Sunningdale conference at which all the constitutional parties of Northern Ireland and Britain should be represented, and to which the forum should be asked to submit its ideas. No answers can be found without the involvement of the people of Northern Ireland but time for constitutional answers is fast running out.

The author is President of the ~~SDLP~~ <sup>SDP</sup>.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Chance of a better deal for Ireland

*From Mr Peter Jay*

Sir, In your disdainful leader (May 3) on the New Ireland Forum report you at least admit that "the case deserves examination before dismissal." On behalf of those who believe that history will judge harshly those who fluff this rare window of opportunity in Irish affairs, may I ask that this examination should take account of these facts:

1. Over the last quarter-century Parliament has removed full British citizenship, without consultation, consent or notable protest from *The Times*, from many millions of people because it seemed good to the majority in Westminster to do so - and, in cases like the Kenyan Asians, despite the most specific guarantees to the contrary.
2. Westminster partitioned Ireland at the behest of and under threats from the Ulster Protestants.
3. Adhesion to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as desired by Unionists, implies acceptance of the sovereignty of Westminster in which the people of Great Britain (i.e., England, Scotland and Wales) are in a majority of 50:1 over the people of Northern Ireland.
4. This GB majority has, at great financial, human and political cost, underwritten over 60 years of opportunity for the NI minority to develop a successful community in the Six Counties.

5. The majority within that NI minority have made no effective efforts during that time to use this opportunity and the people of Great Britain have an unfettered right to say in Westminster that 60-odd years is time enough.

6. Without threatening to act without the consent of the people of NI, even though Westminster clearly has the right to do so, the Government of the United Kingdom has a perfect right to express the opinion that in the long term a democratic united Ireland would be a healthier component of the British Isles and of Western Europe than a divided Ireland threatened by Marxist terrorism fed by that division.

7. This almost certainly is the opinion of most of the people of Great Britain, to say nothing of most of the people of Ireland.

8. Such an opinion, once expressed, would unite London and Dublin, enhance cooperation against terrorism, justify Britain's policy in Europe and America and invite Ulster Protestants to think constructively and positively about coexistence with their Catholic fellow citizens.

Yours etc,  
PETER JAY,  
The Garrick Club,  
Garrick Street, WC1.  
May 3.

X

# Prior to press Mrs T for new Dublin move

by ADAM RAPHAEL, Political Editor

THE Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr Jim Prior, is determined to use the Forum report to launch a major new political initiative in the province.

A three-pronged approach is under consideration in Whitehall: a plan for a new measure of devolved government in Northern Ireland on the basis of power sharing between the communities; joint authority by London and Dublin over such areas as security and possibly agriculture, industry and tourism; and a joint Anglo-Irish parliamentary council to whom those exercising joint authority would report.

Mr Prior is planning talks in the next few weeks with all the Northern Ireland political par-

ties to sound out their private responses towards such an initiative. He also wants direct talks to begin with Dr Garret FitzGerald's Government in Dublin once the European elections next month are out of the way.

Mr Prior is, in effect, putting both his reputation and his political career on the line. It is not yet certain whether he will be able to persuade Mrs Thatcher that the risks of doing nothing are even greater than the risks of an initiative.

Personal relations between the two are much improved, but Mr Prior has made clear that he would not be prepared to stay on as Northern Ireland Secretary if he fails to secure the Cabinet's backing.

By this autumn he will have

served three years in Northern Ireland, so a crucial test of Mrs Thatcher's intentions will come when she reshuffles her Government later this year.

The Prime Minister has, so far, given no public clue as to her reaction to the Forum's report. She is known to be angered by its historical sections and through her former parliamentary private secretary, Mr Ian Gow, now Minister of Housing, she has kept in close touch with Mr Enoch Powell, Ulster Unionist MP for South Down.

But there are also signs that an internal tussle has begun between her Unionist instincts and a growing intellectual conviction that—in the words of one of her colleagues—'we really cannot sit on the lid of this

steaming kettle much longer.'

Mr Prior has been at pains in his public comments on the Forum to point out that none of its options for changes in sovereignty was acceptable to Unionist opinion. But privately he is prepared to be tough with Unionist politicians, if they dig in their heels against reforms which do not affect the province's constitution.

The Northern Ireland Secretary believes there is a good deal of room for discussions both in Belfast and Dublin around the Forum's avowed willingness to discuss 'other views' which would not imply a change in the province's constitutional position. This suggests that joint Anglo-Irish institutions, covering both the economy and security, could play a significant part in any new initiative.

(d) The Irish Editorial Perspective  
on the British Response and Role



## Irish Independent

Incorporating "The Freeman's Journal"

IRELAND'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

# Forum: over to London

HOW QUICKLY we all seemed to get bogged down over an apparent disagreement between Mr. Haughey and the other Party leaders when the Forum report was unveiled yesterday. Question after question was fired at him, and later at the other leaders all trying, it would seem, to show that even before it gained world-wide circulation the Report was a dead letter, because the Irish could not agree among themselves.

The lesson from that is — read the whole report, first, and then make comments and draw conclusions. If that is done then a different picture emerges.

In fact the Report is very clear on this question of options. Fundamentally every Irishman south of the Border and a substantial minority on the other side would like to see a unitary state on this island. No one can dispute that basic attitude of the nationalist (using the word in its widest sense) population. Mr. Haughey is right, therefore, in saying that it is THE solution which all Irish parties would like to see emerge.

But he has put his name to a document which has had to face up to political realities by including other options. Mr. Haughey believes they would not work. But they are included in the Forum's Report despite that and their inclusion means that there is a recognition by the Fianna Fail leader of the existence of those options. They are there to be explored, when the unitary option is rejected.

The British now have before them a document which lists the views of the main Irish nationalist groupings on possible solutions to the Northern problem. If they are wise they will refuse to issue an instantaneous comment on specific suggestions and conclusions and instead will take time assimilating the mass of information which has been gathered, and probing the guarantees offered to the Unionist population of the North. After that process has been completed diplomatic channels can be used to tease out various points before, eventually, a meeting takes place between the Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister.

What Britain, Ireland and the majority of the people in the North want is an end to violence. Security measures alone, while they may contain to some extent the violence experienced in the North, will not eradicate the causes of that violence. For that we must look to a political move, and that move can only come from London which has now been supplied with a number of formulae to choose from.

The Forum's Report emphatically rejects violence as a means of settling any problem. It admits, with no reservations whatsoever, that the majority population in the North has religious and political loyalties which in no circumstances must be tampered with, and it offers a change in our Constitution to ensure that everyone's rights are protected. There is no suggestion in the Report that the fears and apprehensions felt by Northern Unionists are imagined: they are real and must be treated as such.

But if their fears are real so is the violence in the North, and it is now time for the Northern Unionists to realise that violence will not go away by more policing or heavier security. If they want it to fade away they, too, will have to play their part in a political settlement.

So far initial reaction in the North to the Report has been hostile. But this is a superficial reflex action because it cannot have been brought on by a careful reading of the Report. The Northern majority, too, has to shift a little. It believes that the North can go on as it is, protected by an English guarantee, and sustained by massive inflows of cash from London. This is unrealistic.

The North's economy is on its knees. Large parts of it are obsolescent. The unemployment figure is the highest for any region administered by London. It depends for its markets to a large extent on Britain where growth is slow. And its chances of enticing foreign investment in amounts likely to make an impact on this industrial scene are small indeed while the violence continues.

Violence will continue and economic ills fester while a stalemate exists in the North. This is abundantly clear from the many documents associated with the Forum Report, and it must be clear to many people in the North as well. These are the people who must read the Forum Report and start asking themselves questions.

They cannot deny the honesty of purpose of the New Ireland Forum exercise. They cannot ignore the fact that the people of the South have completed a soul-searching attempt to come to grips with the reality of the Northern problem as it exists now and not as it was when partition was imposed. And they cannot ignore the benefits which would flow to this island as a whole if one of the options outlined in the Report, or any other that would work, were implemented.

# THE IRISH TIMES

13 D'OLIER STREET, DUBLIN 2

FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1964

## THE GOOD NEWS

The Forum report is rolling. No immediately positive response from senior British politicians could have been expected. The more thoughtful among them will want to study it in detail before committing themselves; until then, cautious and defensive attitudes will be taken up.

Some of them will have been encouraged to dip into the report by the favourable trend of leading articles in the more serious British newspapers. The *Financial Times* opened by saying that the report deserves an unqualified welcome from all those who want a peaceful solution to the Irish question. The *Guardian* saw it as an offer to start again where Lloyd George and de Valera made their mistakes; "and that is an offer which should be gratefully accepted."

This should give some heart to the Forum members and Nationalists generally and will help to make up somewhat for the surge of frustration which so many here felt when Mr Haughey went on television and appeared to take a line of his own, in effect dissociating himself from his three colleagues. Partly this may have been due to the difficulty of reading Mr Haughey's mind, but he certainly gave every opportunity for misunderstanding.

\* \* \*

Now, however, he appears to have set the record straight. He stands by the report as the other three. For a time the sad joke of Brendan Behan that the first item on the agenda of every Irish organisation is the inevitable split seemed to be perfectly exemplified.

Favourable press comment on the other side of the water gives cause for gratification. The test, however, is the British political establishment. The sense of outrage expressed by the Forum members at the continuing slaughter in Northern Ireland is difficult to bring home to British politicians and public, even though they, too, see the action almost nightly on television.

It is not that the British are particularly cold-hearted. Perhaps it is indifference, or it may be that the memory of empire is strong and, even when no major war was raging, they have long been used to a steady casualty list from such places as the North-West Frontier.

No one in his senses believes that the remedy for the Northern slaughter is merely a question of increasing security. And while the Forum does not claim to step in and do Britain's work for her, it has made a sincere admission of Nationalist failings in the past, and has held out a hand in genuine friendship. In places the report echoed some of the plaintiveness of the anti-partition propaganda of the past. Overall it is a generous and sensitive document.

\* \* \*

The promotion of the message abroad requires techniques different from the approach of earlier days. There are no mass meetings any more. TV interviews are more important than hand-shaking. Distributing abroad press handouts which are appropriate for the home market, is not good enough. All parties will once more regret the killing of the Irish News Agency before it got into its stride.

The possibility of an early descent of the North into even more horrific violence was very much in the minds of the Forum. Unionists have sometimes shown a stoic attitude towards sporadic outbreaks against their establishment. It is assumed that in every generation some uprising against authority will take place.

The difference this time is that it could grow into a permanent state of armed response. It has rumbled on so far for fourteen years. The time may come when it is unstoppable.

That is one of the chief messages of the Forum report. It is an appalling prospect for the people who live on this island and it is a condemnation of the British Government that so little has been done to get to the root of the matter.

## The Cork Examiner

FRIDAY, MAY 4, 1984

The nation

# In the wake of the Forum

IN a controversy which appears in part to have been orchestrated by some sections of the media, which seemed to place more emphasis on personalities than on the New Ireland Forum report itself, Dr FitzGerald and Mr. Haughey appear to be at loggerheads over the question of unification. We would today make the important point that in this instance, personalities do not matter; what does count is the document itself. This is the summation of all the work done by the Forum during its 87 meetings and its recommendations are the work of the whole body, not of any one individual. People are entitled to their personal opinions and so Mr. Haughey must be entitled to his. But he is not one man. The consensus reached at the Forum and written into the document, is what the world must take into account, indeed what the world will soon be taking into account as the document is distributed through our Embassies abroad.

In one sense, it is a pity that this should have to be done, but in the circumstances it is necessary. It is naive to be intransigent Unionism and what appears to be coolness on the part of the British Government towards the report and its conclusions. It is necessary that the feelings of the majority of the people of this island should be promulgated worldwide, so that there can no longer be any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of our position with regard to the partition of our country. It is even more essential because of the recent promises given by Libya's Colonel Ghaddafi of aid for the Provisional IRA. Let there be any doubt about the matter, the whole world must be made aware of our rejection of violence as a solution to the Northern problem, and this conciliatory stance is one of the keystones of the Forum report.

What should now follow, of course, is that Britain too should make her position known.

Indeed, international publication of the Forum document may well have the effect of encouraging this. It is no longer good enough, at this critical stage in the affairs of this island, for the London government to trot out the old, tired cliché about maintaining the Unionist link. The diehard, non-an-inch stance of the Northern Unionists is only to be expected. It will not change unless the conditions which promote it change, and only Britain can change them. As we said yesterday, caution on the part of the Thatcher government is understandable, but what is not acceptable is that the Forum report should be brushed aside as Mr. Prior seemed to be attempting to do.

Britain can no longer opt out of her responsibility for the Northern situation. If it is to be resolved, she will have to act, positively and with state-manship. If she does not, then constitutional politics will be seen to have failed, and because there can only be a constitutional solution, it follows that constitutional politics are on trial now. But what is now very interesting is that if Britain fails to act, her failure will be known to the whole world. Ireland has made its case, openly, honestly and with absolute sincerity and genuineness and that case is now about to go before the international forum. If Mrs. Thatcher fails to respond, she will surely stand indicted by world opinion.

In saying this, we recognise that there are no instant solutions, that the grievous and bloody problem of Northern Ireland will not be resolved overnight. But unless Britain finally and very belatedly decides to grasp the nettle, it will not be solved at all. A reasonably early meeting between heads of state would go a long way towards encouraging the hope that, with goodwill on all sides, further progress may be possible. The alternative does not bear thinking about.

# SCÉALA ÉIREANN

GO SAM RIÁLNA DÓ AGUS OIDEÁ NA hÉIREANN

Dé Luain, Bealtaine 7, 1984

TODAY: Of The Day.

TOMORROW: Of The Day.

## THE BRITISH ASPECT

**I**NITIAL reaction to the report of the New Ireland Forum has been favourable beyond expectation.

All of the major opinion-influencing newspapers in Britain and the United States have given it space and serious consideration; most have offered at least qualified approval.

American political opinion is behind the report; British views are mixed but by no means hostile. The weak spot is, unfortunately, the one that counts most — Northern Ireland. The Unionists are solid in their opposition, Republicans indifferent.

Even so, the ball is rolling. The Forum's aim was to get people thinking and talking about the North's problems and the verdict must be, so far so good.

Mrs. Thatcher made a significant contribution yesterday when she promised a "rigorous intellectual inspection" of the report and conceded an "Irish aspect" to what she had previously tended to see as an internal matter for her government.

She still stands by the guarantee that Unionists will not be forced into a united Ireland. But that need not, must not, prevent her from giving serious consideration to the advantages of unity, both for this country and for Britain.

If it comes to it, the Unionists will not be forced into a united Ireland. Their numbers are their best guarantee of that. But there is no reason why the British government should not, itself, conclude that unity is the best solution and, having so decided, no reason why it should not shape its policy accordingly and seek to lead, cajole or push the Unionists in that direction.

For the fact of the matter is that some form of Irish unity is the best solution and that Unionist politicians, bound by their history, are incapable of initiating or co-operating in any move towards it so long as Britain offers an unconditional guarantee of citizenship and the U.K. link.

It will be a pity if Mrs. Thatcher wastes time trying to shore up the Northern Ireland Assembly. It cannot work because the Unionists, supported by that guarantee, are as incapable of the sort of generosity needed to make it work as they are of any move towards Irish unity.

What we need now is some serious talking on an Anglo-Irish level, whether in the form of a constitutional conference or something less structured. Mrs. Thatcher's recognition of the "Irish aspect" raises hope that she might be thinking along these lines.

The outcome of such talks is impossible to predict and it is pointless to worry at this stage about Unionist reaction. We cannot measure every move on the basis of what they may or may not do.

Irish Independent, Monday, May 7, 1984

## Irish Independent

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IRELAND'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

### Explaining

IF THE FORUM'S Report comes to nothing it won't be for want of comment on it from the Taoiseach. He took up prime radio and television time yesterday telling people on both sides of the Irish Sea (and on both sides of the Border) what he wants to see coming from it.

In all his comments he stressed the fact that the Forum is committed to no particular course of action. And he made the point, which had to be made in the light of Mr. Haughey's first comments, that, yes, a unitary state was the best solution for everyone concerned, but was an unrealistic one to go for. Few of us would disagree with him on that score.

The Taoiseach has to speak on the Forum's Report with the thought constantly on his mind that eventually he and Mrs. Thatcher will hold discussions about it. Nothing must be said now which would prevent such discussions from taking place. Mrs. Thatcher has promised a rigorous intellectual examination of the Report (while pointing once again to the constitutional support the British have to give the Unionists).

On this side of the Irish Sea we tend to underline too much the British Prime Minister's apparent doggedness of character. We then fall into the trap of forgetting that she is a subtle leader of her own Government who understands full well the benefits which would flow to her, internationally, were she to be the British Premier to first initiate a move which would break the Northern log-jam. She wants a solution as much as we do. The Forum Report must contribute to her search for that solution.

# THE IRISH TIMES

13 D'OLIER STREET, DUBLIN 2

MONDAY, MAY 7, 1984

## LEARNING

Many a time, after some spectacular British-induced disaster in the North, despairing Irish politicians have asked, "will they ever learn?" One of the most gratifying things about the British response to the report of the New Ireland Forum, over the last few days, has been the accumulation of evidence of British willingness to learn, to think afresh, to admit past mistakes.

It is the beginning of wisdom — just as the beginning of wisdom for Irish nationalists was to take a long, hard look at some of the intractable realities of life and death on this island.

The favourable reaction of the British media, with one or two regrettable and almost unforgivable exceptions, was striking. There has long been within the establishment press, as within the establishment generally, a body of well-informed and objective opinion which understands the immense difficulty and urgency of the situation and is ready to look with unblinkered eyes at proposals for new departures. But on this occasion it was noteworthy that the report also found favour in sections of the popular press, and indeed in some quite surprising quarters.

What then of the political response? Much is frequently made of Mrs Thatcher's obduracy and determination to cling to her own prejudices, but it would be a mistake to think that establishment opinion has no effect on her. The view of the *Financial Times*, for example, matters to any British Government.

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Whether because of this, or because British Ministers have read the Forum report carefully, or because of the sheer frightfulness of the current situation in Northern Ireland, British political reaction has been relatively favourable and open, and has seemed to become more so in the days since the publication of the report. Even to admit the alienation of Northern Catholics — something Mrs Thatcher vehemently and foolishly denied not long ago — is an advance of sorts. Initially the British Government, and some sections of the press, objected to the Forum's historical analysis criticising British rule in the North. That attitude has now changed, as it must change before there can be hope of serious progress.

The form that progress will take must be a matter for negotiation. Dr FitzGerald was right to call the Forum report "not a blueprint but an agenda." The four nationalist parties have drawn up the agenda: not just an agenda for themselves, but for the British — and the Unionists.

That much having been achieved, the Irish Government and the other parties in the Forum are entitled to ask any objector if he or she has a better idea.

"Ulster is British" will not serve as an answer, whether it comes from Mrs Thatcher or the Rev Ian Paisley. Some of the more moderate — or more frightened — Unionists have made conciliatory noises: too little, perhaps, and too late. But Mr Haughey's famous conference table has begun to look more like a possibility. If they have better, or any ideas but these