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Facsimile Message

To : Press Section

For: Dan Mulhall **Pages :** 7 (Incl. Cover sheet)

From: Adrian O'Neill **Date :** April 13, 1998

CC: Joe Lennon (GIS); Adrian McDaid; Dermot Brangan

White House Reaction to Agreement

Attached for your reference are transcripts of President Clinton's remarks in the Oval Office on Good Friday welcoming the conclusion of the multi-party Agreement and the text of the President's weekly radio address on Saturday which was devoted to Northern Ireland.

Senator Mitchell is meeting the President in the Oval Office this afternoon. I understand there will be some pool coverage of the meeting, including RTE. Senator Mitchell will then most likely meet the press at the "stake out" area as he leaves the White House. I also understand that there is a possibility that President Clinton might make himself available this afternoon for a 10 minute telephone conference interview with the Irish press corp in Washington (Joe Carroll of the *Irish Times*, Susan Garraty of the *Irish Independent* and Mark Little of *RTE*).

END

**THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary**

For Immediate Release

April 10, 1998

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS**

The Oval Office

2:30 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon. After a 30-year winter of sectarian violence, Northern Ireland today has the promise of a springtime of peace. The agreement that has emerged from the Northern Ireland peace talks opens the way for the people there to build a society based on enduring peace, justice, and equality. The vision and commitment of the participants in the talks has made real the prayers for peace on both sides of the Atlantic and both sides of the peace line.

All friends of Ireland and Northern Ireland know the task of making the peace endure will be difficult. The path of peace is never easy. But the parties have made brave decisions. They have chosen hope over hate, the promise of the future over the poison of the past. And in so doing, already they have written a new chapter in the rich history of their island — a chapter of resolute courage that inspires us all.

In the days to come, there may be those who will try to undermine this great achievement — not only with words but perhaps also with violence. All the parties and all the rest of us must stand shoulder to shoulder to defy any such appeals.

On this Good Friday, we give thanks for the work of Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair, two truly remarkable leaders who did an unbelievable job in these talks. We give thanks for the work of Senator George Mitchell, who was brilliant and unbelievably patient and long suffering. We give thanks especially to the leaders of the parties, for they had to make the courageous decisions. We also thank Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Ahern's predecessors for starting and nurturing the process of peace.

Together, all these people have created the best chance for peace in a generation. In May, the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland will have the chance to seize the gift they have been given. At this Easter season, British and Irish leaders have followed the admonition of Luke, "to give light to them who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide their feet into the way of peace." For that, peace-loving people the world over can be very grateful.

Q Mr. President, what promises or assurances did the United States make to help move this

process along?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, from the very beginning all I have tried to do is to help create the conditions in which peace could develop, and then to do whatever I was asked to do or whatever seemed helpful to encourage and support the parties in the search for peace. And that's all I did last night.

Q Did you offer any assistance in terms of financial aid, and what did you think --

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- where did you really weigh in in all those phone calls.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, the answer to your first question is no. Now, we have, as all of you know, an international fund for Ireland, which I have strongly supported. And I do believe that there will be very significant economic benefits flowing to the people of Ireland, both Protestant and Catholic, in Northern Ireland and in the Republic, if this peace takes hold. But there was no specific financial assurance sought, nor was any given.

In terms of the give and take, you know, I made a lot of phone calls last night and up until this morning -- actually until right before the last session. But I think the specifics are not all that important. I did what I was asked to do. Again, I was largely guided by the work of Prime Minister Blair and Prime Minister Ahern. I had a very -- a long talk, in the middle of the night for me, last night with Senator Mitchell about his work there, and I'm looking forward to seeing him early next week. I just did what I thought would help. And I tried to do what I was asked to do.

Q Mr. President, will you be going to Belfast now that they've reached a deal?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I really haven't had much discussion about it. No decision has been made. This is not even a day to think about that. This is a day to celebrate the achievement of the people and the peace talks.

Q President Clinton, do you feel somewhat vindicated for the policies that -- including giving Gerry Adams a visa here -- that have come under scrutiny and at times have brought you some derision from other parts of the world for being too provocative.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, when I did it, I thought it would help to create a climate in which peace might emerge. And I believe it was a positive thing to do. I believed it then, I believe it now.

But make no mistake about it. Whenever peace is made by people anywhere, the credit belongs to the parties whose own lives and livelihoods and children and future are on the line. And that's the way I feel today. If anything that I or the United States was able to do was helpful, especially because of our historic ties to Great Britain and because of the enormous number of Irish Americans we have and the feelings we have for the Irish and their troubles, then I am very grateful. But the credit for this belongs to the people who made the decisions.

Q What role do you expect to play from now on?

Q Mr. President, how fragile is the peace agreement? How fragile is it and will it be able

to withstand a violation of the cease-fire?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think the parties will honor it. They fought too hard over the details — down to the eleventh hour and then some. They even went past Senator Mitchell's deadline and well into this Good Friday. Given Irish history, maybe it's appropriate that this was done on this day.

So they fought too hard over the details to violate them. I expect the parties to honor the agreement. And then it's really up to the people. The people of Northern Ireland and the people of the Republic of Ireland are going to have a vote on it in May, in late May, and their judgment will prevail.

Will there be those who are disgruntled, who may seek to violate the cease-fire, who are not part of the parties that have signed off on this agreement? There may well be. But if we all stand shoulder-to-shoulder together and everyone understands that the integrity of the leaders and the parties that are part of this process is still unshakable and rock solid, I think we'll be all right. We just need to let the Irish people have their say, and I think they will have their say.

Q What role do you expect to play from now on in this process, in terms of trying to maintain this agreement?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't know. If I can be helpful, I will. That's been my position all along. That's what I tell everybody that talks to me about it. But no decision has been made about that and, you know, the United States believes in this process passionately. I, personally, am deeply committed to it. And if the leaders think there's something I can do to be helpful, well, of course, I'll try. But there's been no discussion about it and no decision made.

Q Mr. President, could there have been an agreement today without your efforts last night?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I certainly — I wouldn't say there couldn't have been. I was asked to help; I did my best to help.

But let me say again, there were people that I was talking to up until 8:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., even later this morning, who haven't been to bed in 48 hours. They sat and talked and worked and fought and argued and got back together. And for some of them, they put their political lives on the line; others may have put even more on the line, as you well know.

And they and the Prime Ministers and Senator Mitchell, who somehow kept it all together, they deserve the credit. I just tried to do what I was asked to do. If I played a positive role, I'm grateful to have had the chance to do so.

Q Happy Easter. Are you going to Camp David?

THE PRESIDENT: I am. We're going up probably in the early evening and I hope all of you have a great holiday. Bless you.

Q What are you going to do about the Middle East? (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we got Bosnia and Haiti, and now, I hope, Ireland. And I'll just

So I would hope that those who care desperately about the Middle East and want the peace process there to prevail will take great heart here, because believe you me, I know a lot about this. There were a lot of tough decisions which had to be made, nobody could get everything they wanted, and risks had to be taken. And they were taken. And they now will be taken. And it seems to me that the friends of peace in the Middle East should take great heart from this and perhaps we'll even find some examples that could be followed.

Thank you.

Q Mrs. Clinton said that peace in Ireland is an article of faith. Is there going to be any kind of Clinton celebration here this evening?

THE PRESIDENT: Not celebrating right now, but we need to let the Irish people have their say. That's going to be in a few weeks.

Q Going to let these guys go to sleep?

THE PRESIDENT: Right now I want these guys to go to sleep. I hope nothing serious happens to our country in the next eight hours, because I've got a bunch of pickle brains in the NSC. (Laughter.)



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**THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
Saturday, April 11, 1998**

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RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE NATION

The Oval Office

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Across America and around the world, this is a holy weekend for three of the world's great religions. Christians are celebrating Easter; Jews, Passover; and Muslims have just ended their annual pilgrimage, the Hajj.

On this special weekend, the eyes of the world and the prayers of so many, are focused on Northern Ireland, as a historic peace agreement was reached among representatives of all the major parties to that long and tragic conflict.

I especially want to salute the leadership of Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland, Prime Minister Tony Blair of Great Britain, and the leaders of all the parties who came together in a remarkable display of courage to set aside differences in the pursuit of peace. I also salute the previous Prime Ministers of Ireland and Great Britain, who started and nourished this peace process.

And all Americans should take a special measure of pride that the talks in Northern Ireland were chaired by George Mitchell, the former Majority Leader of the United States Senate, who has served his country and the cause of peace very, very well. I thank him for his brilliant leadership.

Of course, we understand that the pain and hatred of so many years cannot and will not be washed away in one weekend. So on behalf of the American people I pledge the continuing aid, support, encouragement and prayers of the United States to the effort to build a lasting peace and an enduring prosperity in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

In the last analysis, the future of that region lies in the hearts and hands of its people. Like so many Americans, part of my family calls Ireland home. And having been there, having met with so many remarkable Irish men and women, from all sides of the conflict, I have seen the future in their eyes -- a future in which children can grow up free from fear, a future rich with the lilt of Irish laughter, not the pain of bitter tears.

There may be those who seek to undermine this agreement by returning to violence, so we are resolved that the acts of peace and courage will triumph over acts of cowardice and terror.

Tomorrow, the dawn will break on Easter morning. All across Ireland, Catholics and Protestants will in their own way proclaim their faith in the triumph of life over death. On this Easter, their leaders have lifted their Christian beliefs and have lived them by giving the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland the chance to choose peace over conflict, indeed, to choose life over death.

When I visited Ulster, and later the Republic of Ireland, the great Nobel Prize-winning Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, gave me a stanza from a poem he wrote that today hangs on the wall of my office in the upstairs of the White House. Its message has a special meaning today. Here's what it says: "History says, 'Don't hope on this side of the grave.' But then, once in a lifetime, the longed-for tidal wave of justice can rise up, and hope and history rhyme." What a wonderful Easter gift for the Irish, Irish Americans, and lovers of peace everywhere.

Thank you for listening.