

Concerned Irish Americans

FOR RELEASE: June 17, 1997
CONTACT: Rep. Pete King (202) 225-7896

--or--
Terry George (212) 535-3101

IRISH AMERICAN LEADERS URGE ALL PARTIES TO TAKE COURAGEOUS ACTIONS TO END IRISH CONFLICT

Noting that the history of Ireland has been "a history of lost opportunities," Irish-American leaders from government, the arts and journalism have issued a statement addressed to all parties to the conflict in Ireland.

Condemning such "short-sighted" actions as Britain's failure to enter into all-party talks during the IRA's 17-month cease-fire and the IRA's tragic killing of two RUC officers in Armagh yesterday, the Irish-American leaders are calling for specified "courageous actions" by all parties.

Pointing to the "historic opportunity" offered by the "converging of unprecedented events," the statement cited the landslide victory of Tony Blair, the election of a new Irish government lead by Bertie Ahern, the strong electoral showing of Sinn Fein in the British and Irish elections and the continued interest and involvement of President Bill Clinton as creating an opportunity which must not be lost.

The Irish-American leaders commended the Blair government for initiating "solid, confidence-building measures," Ahern for his commitment to the peace process and President Clinton for continuing America's role as an honest broker.

The group was critical of the "negative posturing of the unionist political establishment led by David Trimble and Ian Paisley" for "throwing repeated roadblocks" and "appealing to base sectarianism."

Stating "this is a moment which must be seized," the Irish-American leaders urge

- 1) The British government to make it clear that Sinn Fein will be admitted to all-party talks following an IRA-cease fire, with all issues on the table, no one issue obstructing the talks and an agreed upon timetable;
- 2) Trimble and Paisley to end their discredited policies of obstruction, threat and sectarianism and agree to good-faith, all-party talks;
- 3) Loyalist paramilitaries to cease all acts of violence; and
- 4) The Irish Republican Army to call an unequivocal cease-fire.

WASHINGTON

FRI 14 MAY 97 00:16

PG.06

THE SIGNATURES TO THE ATTACHMENT ARE:

5

Rep. Peter King (R-NY)
Rep. Ben Gilman (R-NY)
Rep. Thomas Manton (D-NY)
Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA)

Frank McCourt, Pulitzer Prize-winning Author
Pete Hamill, Journalist and Author
Terry George, Film Director
Paul O'Dwyer, Attorney

Frank Durkan, Chairman, Americans For A New Irish Agenda

(Reps. King, Gilman, Manton and Neal are co-chairmen of the Congressional Ad Hoc Committee for Irish Affairs)