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we have advanced, beyond any shadow of a doubt, demonstrates that the whole country does better when more people have opportunity.

For all those reasons, I predict an overwhelming victory in November. And I thank you for making sure it happens.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. at the Hay Adams Hotel.

Remarks on the Northern Ireland Peace Process and an Exchange With Reporters

April 10, 1998

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, peaceloving people the world over can be very grateful.

U.S. Role in the Peace Process

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.

Visa for Sinn Fein Leader Gerry Adams

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?

Stability of the Accord

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 11th 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-should 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.

U.S. Role in the Peace Process

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, 9 o'clock 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.

President's Easter Plans

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.

Middle East Peace Process

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 keep working on it. The Irish thing ought to give you hope for the Middle East because the lesson is: just don't ever stop. And in the end, if the will for peace is stronger than the impulse to avoid it and the impulse to avoid the tough decisions and the sacrifices that are made—that have to be made—then the will for peace can prevail. That's the lesson here.

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.

Reaction to Agreement

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

The President. I'm 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 8 hours, because I've got a bunch of pickle brains in the NSC. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Bertie Ahern and former Prime Minister John Bruton of Ireland; Prime Minister Tony Blair and former Prime Minister John Major of the United Kingdom; George J. Mitchell, Special Assistant to the President for Northern Ireland; and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams.

Message on the 30th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act

April 10, 1998

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating the 30th anniversary of the enactment of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968—the Federal Fair Housing Act.

Within a week of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Congress passed and President Johnson signed into law this landmark legislation, which has helped countless Americans achieve the American Dream. The theme of this anniversary celebration, ''Many Neighborhoods—One America,'' reflects the reality that people of diverse cultures and backgrounds can live together in harmony and reaffirm the American ideals of equality, opportunity, and freedom.

By limiting housing choice, discrimination reduces the quality of life for many Americans. During the past three decades, we have made great strides in opening housing markets. But housing discrimination, although less apparent than in years past, still exists, and the need to enforce fair housing laws vigorously remains as urgent today as ever.

My Administration is committed to building strong partnerships between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and local communities. I have proposed the largest single increase in HUD's civil rights enforcement programs in two decades. My proposal includes a significant increase in funding for HUD's Fair Housing Initiatives and Fair Housing Assistance Programs that, among other things, will combat racially motivated hate crimes related to housing. We are also seeking congressional approval to raise the Federal Housing Administration loan limit so that more Americans, including minorities and women, can become homeowners.