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# Week Ending Friday, March 30, 2001

## Remarks Prepared for Delivery to a Friends of Ireland Luncheon

*March 15, 2001*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Taoiseach,* Secretary of State for Northern Ireland John Reid, First Minister David Trimble, Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams, Secretary Powell, Majority Leader Lott, other Members of Congress, thank you.

I thank the Speaker for the invitation to come here to celebrate the shared history and heritage that unite Ireland and America. It is a great honor. And I promise that my remarks today will be briefer than the last time I spoke on Capitol Hill.

Some of you may be aware that I don't attend a lot of formal lunches like this. But I had a change of heart when I saw that the Speaker's menu included Tex-Mex food. I just couldn't pass up the chance to try a green burrito.

On Saint Patrick's Day, we all get to be Irish for a day. There has been a lot of speculation about whether I'm part Irish. I must be. People say I talk like James Joyce writes.

Today I will speak plainly about an extremely important topic, peace in Northern Ireland. The United States will remain unwavering in our support of peace. We will remain unwavering in our support for all parties who show courage and leadership on behalf of peace. And we will remain unalterably opposed to anyone who would destroy peace by preaching or practicing violence.

Much of the progress toward peace in the past several years has been aided by the engagement of the United States. As I told Prime Minister Blair—and as I will tell Prime Minister Ahern tomorrow—the United States stands ready to continue that engagement. The reason is simple: Peace in Northern Ireland is in America's strong national interest.

The peace that holds today has many authors, from President Clinton to leaders from Britain, Ireland, and Northern Ireland to American political leaders, such as Senator Mitchell. The Good Friday agreement remains the best hope for lasting peace for the people of Northern Ireland. The goal of the United States is to see that agreement fully implemented.

There are two reasons for this. First, this is what the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland voted for back on May 22, 1998. And they did so by a very large margin. Second, the Good Friday agreement embodies principles of fundamental fairness without which peace will never breathe.

What are those principles? First, as stated in the agreement itself, "it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts . . . to exercise their right to self-determination on the basis of consent." The second principle is that of territorial integrity, that borders should never be changed through violence. Third, that terrorism is always and every where wrong. And fourth, there is the principle of equality of representation and equal treatment regardless of religion, race, or ethnicity.

The progress the parties have made in putting these principles into practice has made a difference—a big difference. And no one knows this better than the people of Northern Ireland themselves. Trade, investment, and jobs are up. Violence is down from previous levels. More people are moving into Northern Ireland than are moving out. In most places on most days for most families, life is normal. They don't have to worry when they get on a bus, go to a store or church, or send a child to school. And no one can put a price on that peace of mind.

But no one can or should take this progress for granted, no one on either side of the border, either side of the Irish Sea, or either side of the Atlantic. It may be tempting for

the parties to think they face a choice between further progress and the status quo. But in fact, the actual choice is probably between progress and a return to violence, because extremists on both sides still seek to destroy the agreement. Delay and impasse create a vacuum that they will try to fill. We must not let them.

The talks that Prime Ministers Blair and Ahern convened in Belfast last week created an opportunity to restore momentum toward resolving these issues and fully implementing the Good Friday agreement. Keeping the process moving forward will mean compromise, hard work, and trust. Trust is critical to resolving tough issues facing the parties: building a police force that has the respect of all the people; putting arms finally and forever beyond use; achieving a normal security presence throughout the society; making sure the new political institutions are here to stay. Now is the time to act—as Yeats said, "Do not wait to strike till the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking."

The parties in Northern Ireland, many of whose leaders are represented here today, have shown themselves capable of rising to the occasion and moving forward with wisdom and confidence. And as you do so, know that the United States will be ready to help in any way the governments and the parties find useful.

It's been said that Ireland is a place where "the inevitable never happens and the unexpected constantly occurs." Three years ago, the parties unexpectedly gave us the Good Friday agreement. Weeks later, citizens in all parts of the island defied all expectations by voting to approve the agreement in overwhelming numbers. This year on Saint Patrick's Day, let us all resolve to push for peace, a lasting, real, and needed peace.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President delivered the remarks at approximately noon in the Rayburn Room at the U.S. Capitol. In the prepared text, the President referred to First Minister David Trimble and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, Northern Ireland Executive; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; and former Senator George J. Mitchell, who chaired the multiparty talks in Northern Ireland. This text was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 23. The remarks as delivered were not released. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

## Remarks Honoring Greek Independence Day

*March 23, 2001*

Your Eminence, thank you very much, sir. It's always an honor to be in your presence. I think the last time we were together was at the church service right after I had the honor of being sworn in as the President. And I appreciate so very much you being there.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Niotis, Ambassador Philon, Ambassador Marcoullis, Director Tenet, distinguished guests from Greece, as well as from America, welcome. This is a beautiful room to hold an important ceremony.

I want to thank you all for coming. I particularly want to thank Congressman Mike Bilirakis, as well as Senator Olympia Snowe, who is not with us today. I know where she is since I flew her up to Maine earlier. [*Laughter*] I want to thank you both for organizing the events. And it's interesting to note that I have been in your State and her State within the last week. All is well. [*Laughter*]

When I became President, I inherited the responsibility to safeguard one of America's oldest and most sacred friendships—that of the Government and people of the United States with the Government and people of Greece. We must keep that relationship vibrant, as it has been for 180 years.

It was 180 years ago that Greece proclaimed its independence—yet another example of Greece's contribution to the cause of human liberty. Few nations in the history of the world have done more to contribute to democratic self-government.

A Chinese scholar, hoping to foster an appreciation of Western thought in his country, recently translated the works of Homer into Chinese. He mastered ancient Greek in order to produce the most accurate translation possible and explained it this way: "If one wants to understand Western civilization, one has to search back to its roots, and the roots lead to ancient Greece."